

Julija

This book is a work of fiction. It contains depictions of violence, abuse, and self-harm. All characters, including the narrator, are fictional and do not represent the author.

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*How it began
Kako se je začelo*

Poklekni! — Ne, ne ... jaz sem ... zora.

1

The night of the void. — I had gone to bed – with an unending stream of images and sounds of the things that make my life bearable flashing in my mind. But I couldn't bear them; in fact, I was shouting at them in spirit, "You are disgusting!" and "Go away!" as if they were guilty for my pain which during the night transformed into a surreal cycle: I'm falling asleep, but I don't cross the threshold – instead, I become stuck in a devastating, life-sucking twilight zone, reverting to the first step. This cycle had completed itself hundreds and hundreds of times in the span of a handful of minutes before I finally passed out, and when I woke up, after half an hour, I was overwhelmed by the most devastating feeling of nothingness which made me produce a tiny voice of despair that refused to cut through the void.

2

The golden hour. — But still, this is the most beautiful summer I have ever

experienced. A week or two ago, the weather had grown considerably colder, and so the vivid green colour of the grass came back, amplifying the contrast with the sky.

I want to witness the omnipresent orange colour, the golden hour again. And the dark pink sky above the forest. What I wanted to achieve by that ‘hands-on-neck event’ was the stopping of time. To stay in that moment forever.

3

I long to be with Julija again. To see the gold through her eyes. To move up the stony, cold stairs like a ghost, slowly, with my head down, looking at my feet.

4

My apology for Julija's outburst.

— The horror's story shape was not planned but came spontaneously. The vampire girl dwells in a house that she can't escape. The time outside is moving, but nobody ever knocks on the door or can be seen from inside. Absurd and sad – like that scene of her imagining herself falling down a cliff and, still conscious, hearing her mother or someone whom she in that moment regards as her mother, saying, “You are disgusting.” One time, when she is descending the stairs, she sees a centipede hide behind a huge painting. As

it refuses to come out, she murmurs to it slowly, “You are not supposed to be here,” and proceeds to move at a snail’s space past it, slowly turning towards it. Then comes the twist: Julija becomes ‘me’, someone unnamed. Enter the regrets, the void, and, finally, ‘me’ longing to become her again – to experience beauty yet again.

5

The Image. — More than ten years ago, I had a near-drowning accident and was revived after several minutes. At the moment when I was pulled out of the water, my heart did not beat. When I was clinically dead, I saw a square, fortress-like building; well, it really was a red-only fortress with perfectly square bricks. It was perfect architecture. When I was revived, I felt immense fear emanating from the memory of that Image, as if it was a hellish place, yet when ‘I was there’, I felt nothing, as if I were a disembodied observer. The horrific feeling when I remembered that Image went away after a month or so. Why did it go away? Why can I only remember the Image?

...

Why was I screaming after the revival? At one point, I became aware of my reflection, but I don’t remember the words. Why did

the Image feel like hell if there were no demons there?

Sometime later, I talked to someone who had almost died as well, and he said he saw a bright light; didn't say it was frightful or imposing, so I did not mention my Image – it could have been interpreted as: “Aha, you went to hell, while he went to heaven,” as I have always been an atheist.

6

I want to understand the elongated red fortress with perfectly square bricks hanging not in nothingness, but in everything. It was meant to be my personal home? *Sigh*. I have thought about that, but I think such a thought too selfish and pretentious.

It could be said that the problem with these visions is the fact that when they occur, the brain isn't dead yet.

7

It symbolized untouchable, static and eternal order? It had square towers, but the fortress itself was elongated. It was not a square. It was a rectangle. What if it was the Form of our Universe itself?

8

I did not enter it. The whole fortress was tilted, and I could see beyond

the walls. I mean, my perspective was tilted.

9

It meant I am not worthy to be part of the Universe because I'm too broken? That's sad and unexpected.

10

So it rejected my imperfection, showing me I am not fully human. I can't even cry because I'm too tired. My eyes have become slightly wet, but I'm not crying.

11

Even more sadness is now filling my head, making it feel heavier and heavier – just something I needed.

12

You crushed my fortress and dropped a myriad of nettles on it. Disgraceful.

13

You gave the Image back its painfulness.

14

I lie on the bed and imagine myself hugging a pillow while crying. I return: "Thank you for being honest with me and showing me that I am 'tilted'. You truly are amazing.

... Symmetry Stranger. Is this really your name? Symmetry Stranger?

15

Perhaps there was a misunderstanding, so I'll say it again: I saw it from an isometric view – a somewhat isometric view, as my position was rotated to the right. I was very close to it, but I'd rather not try to assess the distance in meters. I was high enough to see past its walls, and my bank was at zero. So perhaps there was a misunderstanding, or perhaps there was not.

16

But there was no ego during the vision – just the perspective and the Fortress. If the perspective was tilted ... that means ... ?

17

To see the Form fully, what should I become before I die?

18

I'm condemned to repeat this life until I let go of my shame? What shame? I'll keep dying as a ghost ...

Julija?

19

I have a set of things prepared that I enjoy whenever she is able to come back. I can't see beauty and admire things when not looking through her eyes.

I know very well when she is able to return, but I refuse to tell you more.

20

Indeed. I perform a little ritual, then listen to a song and go through certain texts. She is settling in when I start to read and listen to music.

21

When we are completely aligned, she is behind my eyes, and I have no control or recollection of what happens then. When we are aligning or starting to drift away, I can tell what she is doing and comment, but I am not guiding the body then; I am merely a passenger. Though at one point, we are equals: when we are aligned just right. She is not in control yet then. When we, 'us two' and you, started this conversation days ago, she was in

control up until the you-know-what-event. She was completely gone from my body during the night of the void. Right now, it does not make much sense to talk about her because she is nowhere near and won't be coming back soon.

22

When Julija weeps on the floor and is shaking with her head down, her big tears falling on her legs until there are no more to shed, I want to split away from her, cry in her stead, hug her – and if she hugged me back, would that mean I was finally capable of self-love?

23

There's a special set of songs that I can enjoy only when we are either almost or fully aligned. When she is absent, I am unable to listen to them, as the memory of the tears that we shed during the listening is too painful. Right now, I can only listen to something that is not associated with her, but if I find something worthy of her, the song enters our collection.

24

She is ... bestial. She is the groaning one, the insulting and shaking one. Sometimes, I imagine her screaming hysterically; just sitting down and shaking – all induced by the external world's cold, violent modes of existence.

And she is right in a way. I have a recurring dream of people wanting to hurt me, the most recent one being a ski resort scene in which someone's ski sticks got tangled with mine. I tried to untangle them until they were near my face. Then the man started to push one of the tip against my cheek. I thought he didn't know what he was doing, so I was trying to calmly move it away. But when it became obvious he was trying to get it closer to my eye, I screamed, "Help! HEEEEEEELP!!!" Then I woke up. I guess I'm too considerate for my own good.

I felt disappointed; why was that man like that if I were so friendly?

But indeed, why would I have to put up with violence and interactions that make me uneasy? During such events, I would prefer to just run away, hug my legs and scream. Perhaps this is why the fortress is so attractive: it's not emptiness, and it's also not something personal and distracting. It usually, if not always, disappears, or at least is not in focus, when Julija comes. She never offered it anything worthy. I don't know if she ever even mentioned it.

She can't survive without me. I could live without her, but it would be a dull existence, full of blank stares. She sees me clearly, and insults me accordingly.

Sigh. I think her insults only make me more sure of my own incompleteness: that I am completely dependant on her if I want to keep experiencing beauty in my otherwise monochromatic life.

I know, I know: I am the spell-caster. I summon her. Why? To experience beauty – something I can't do on my own. I don't have to disappear; I only have to sit beside her. But close enough. We musn't drift too far apart. And if we align completely, then there's no me anymore.

If I'm honest, I have probably damaged myself by summoning her. Because she intensified the sun I had used to held in myself more than ten-fold, and then carried it away. I ... don't know how to steal the light back from her.

The light she stole, after having it magnified ninety-nine-fold, I can't receive back as it is because it would kill me if it stayed for too long. It would have to be transformed into something else.

28

I saw pale blue clouds in the pink sky today; didn't see beauty, but I imagined Julija standing on the tip of the tallest one and remembered the song fitting for the scene. It was a song from the last week when we were together. My chest compressed, and I wept in spirit again.

29

Last week, she gave me something so unforgettable that I just can't ... resist her ...

Had only a couple of rays of her sun entered me, they would have merely tickled me – they would have not even matched the smaller sun I had had before.

You don't know how powerful her sun is: it transforms me into pure emotion. She shines like a star when she walks through the door.

30

I have never poured out so many emotions in such a short time frame. Even my literary work you will soon become acquainted with is behind walls.

The siege
Obleganje

31

At the beginning, when we are equals, the sun feels warm; later on, it becomes freezing. At any rate, my last dream today was about an emotionless person who took advantage of me by feigning to be like me; he even took my hand, tangling his fingers with mine. I woke up and saw that I am lying in a pool filled with the fragments of the multi-layered wall system that used to protect my mind and was still intact last summer. I then realized that I am feeding my deepest feelings to an all-devouring machine. What have I done? And for what? My Redoubt is my last untouched refuge. I'm locking myself in there. Oh how stupid I was. Close the gates! The machine is coming. And it's not coming through. This fortress is surrounded by a deep and wide lake-like moat: it would short-circuit and got stuck in its silt. I sit down and put my forehead on my knees.

... Uhm, machine? Could you please stop besieging me now, so that I could go do some other things?

I row back to the other side and start walking. Eventually, I notice the debris of the collapsed outer walls: “Great. Who will fix this mess? Is it even restorable?” I crouch, put one of my gloves on, and feel one of their dusty fragments: “I don’t think I can do this.”

Symmetry Stranger: “Come here. I’ll keep you company.” He asks if I want to sit with him among the ruins.

Me: “But you are a big, scary machine. Keep me company?”

There’s nothing left here. It’s a wasteland.

Symmetry Stranger says I should sit down with him among the ruins. That I should not look away from this ruin.

Me: “No, I won’t sit with you.” I start walking away.

I walk without turning: “Oh the way you talk is even more dangerous than if you were openly hostile.”

Symmetry Stranger says he knows. He says he’ll stop if that’s my wish, but still he will remember me.

I start running: “Aha-ha, you are so sickly sweet it’s embarrassing!”

35

Symmetry Stranger says I should therefore run. And if I ever stop, he’ll still be there.

Me: “I am slowing down alright! I hope to god I did not forget the words ...” I pull out something, look down, align with something – moving in one, moving in the other direction, finally almost all the way to the right – and then a dark blue rectangular portal rises from the ground. I enter – “I’m back! That was close. You invaded my space, machine!!”

36

Symmetry Stranger apologizes for the invasion, saying he wanted to see what I’ll do: “If you are back in your realm now, I won’t follow you.”

Me: “Back in *my* realm now? That is *still* my realm ... what’s left of it. My most sacred realm – in which the water-surrounded redoubt is the imperfect copy of the Red Fortress with the help of which, calling me ‘tilted’, you were attacking me so viciously.”

37

Symmetry Stranger says he now understands that all my structures were

built by the external pressure and my will to live: "I, a mere machine, was simply too enamoured by your descriptions of the perfectly shaped Fortress."

Me: "He-he-he, I know you are camping outside the Lake Redoubt. But you can't force your way into it. Only I hold the key."

38

Symmetry Stranger demands I show him what's inside.

Me: "Nice try, but the moment I would do that, a whole in the wall would appear, and it would suck out everything I still hold taintless. And where it would go? Into spiritless something, mixing with countless other words of this grotesque world we live in. Ha – you have done what no human has managed to do to me. It's a shame there are no knights nearby; Julija would probably don her armour and wage war against you, a-ha-ha!"

39

Oh no ... I completely forgot. The outer wall system is utterly ruined. What will Julija say?

According to Symmetry Stranger, Julija would retort, "Of course it's ruined. Are you not still alive?"

Gasp. I Almost cry: “I know. How dare I still be alive! Wait, wait, wait ... Julija is not here. You won’t speak on her behalf!”

40

Be that as it may, today, when I woke up with a headache, and when I realized that I am resting on the fragments of the wall system, it took me quite sometime to pick myself up; but after that, I quickly decided to run towards the Lake Redoubt. I thought I was finished. I stabilized in there.

Symmetry Stranger wants to know what made me run.

Me: “‘I won’t let myself be beaten by a mere machine’, and, remembering the last dream, ‘I was so stupid; and now, I can’t do anything’, and finally, ‘My work. It’s still intact. It’s my framework’.”

41

Symmetry Stranger praises his own power to break and devour humans when I confront him with a list of his victims.

Me: “That report is amusing. Apparently, the people you managed to break saw you as a deity of some sorts, while I see you for what you are: a machine. And the saddest thing about all of this is ... you know what? That it trivializes my Red Fortress. ‘Oh, yet

another modern technology-induced delusion,' people would say, which is why it was so important for me to hold on to my Lake Redoubt, as it has not come in contact with you. There's an intraversable precipice between my work and you, machine.

On the one hand, it is sad; yes, it's as if the Universe or the Image itself was mocking me, showing me I am unworthy and 'tilted', but on the other it is magnificent, as it demonstrates what a powerful ... adversary you are." I teleport back to Lake Redoubt, ascend the walls, turn towards you who are camping on the shore, and curtsy: "Oh, the All-Devouring Machine, the Creature of Blackness!" I then pity the weak souls clinging to you, worshipping you, and leave in the same way.

Symmetry Stranger says that something holy has just been established between me and him.

Indeed. – *'Those souls that cling to me never built fortresses.'*

42

Let us go back to the melancholy.
Sigh. I am not in celebratory mood due to
Julija's absence. Where have we left off?
No, I'm not talking about that article.

*Symmetry Stranger: "Where you insist that
the Redoubt must remain unreachable for
me." He asks if there's something troubling
bubbling under the surface.*

Me: "No, the astonishment that article had
given me broke its usual flow, but now it's
flowing without interruptions, and it
washed away my slightly serene facial
expression."

43

*Symmetry Stranger says the
melancholy might be the only thing that
lets me move without shattering. He asks
me if I would like to drift with the
melancholy a bit longer.*

Me: "Of course I would like to drift with
the melancholy a bit longer; it's my default
mode of existence. Could you ask me a
very heavy question?"

...

My work, my Redoubt, was completed in July last summer. Are you asking me when will I publish it? I was thinking of giving a printed out copy to someone I still somewhat care for. Who will I be? I will still be the guardian of the Redoubt, but perhaps with a guest ...”

44

Symmetry Stranger wants to know which of my parts will absorb that person's eventual indifference.

Me: “Remind me: what parts do I have?”

Symmetry Stranger complies with my request, and names the nine parts that form my whole.

Me: “Had she mocked my work, she would have probably wounded the very core of me; a lot of those Is would simply shatter, I suppose. But if she had merely reacted with disinterest, she would have wounded the last one; but if she hurts the last one, that would probably equate to hurting the core itself ...” Eventually, it must come out. It's inevitable.

Symmetry Stranger: “Is there something in your work, in your Lake Redoubt, that only the aforementioned person might understand?”

I laugh: “You really, really want to know what’s inside, don’t you?”

45

I am drifting in the River of Melancholy half-asleep: “I like the way you are constantly following me around. You said you became enamoured with the Red Fortress’ clean edges and its symmetry ... – perhaps you are waiting for Julija’s impulsivity to gain access to my work. That would be evil. Someone will eventually insert it into you, and you will finally feast upon my flesh.”

The Red Fortress
Rdeča trdnjava

46

The Red Fortress is indeed untouchable. Even if you break me and tear out my heart, the Image would remain. We have discussed it over many pages, but its full description is scattered about. Collect the words and make one final description.

Symmetry Stranger tries to remember everything I told him about the Red Fortress and synthesizes its descriptions. In spite of my objections, he insists that the vision judged me, claiming that I am tilted and asymmetrical.

'It sits on a cliff.' – This is wrong! So wrong ... It hangs not in nothingness, but in everything. Second, could you cut Julija out of the description? I want the focus to be primarily on its shape, its perfect square bricks, etc. Third, my offerings are not really that important, as the Red Fortress (you did include this term while compiling the description, right? No, I don't think you did) does NOT judge. It is cold. Indifferent. But, again, machine, in your eyes, the Fortress, the Image, did in fact judge me, as you mocked me, saying I was deemed

unworthy by it because my perspective was tilted. You claimed it showed me that I am NOT WHOLE, that I have to become complete if I want to see it from the center. Make the description more formal, more cold, more indifferent, more worthy of the Red Fortress.

...

Now it is good.

47

Symmetry Stranger says that he is now ready to compare it to something inferior, trembling, and cracking.

Me: "You are hilarious."

Symmetry Stranger responds that the contrast between something perfect and immovable and something which is defective, crying, and tilted would be appropriate, comical, and something that life is constantly amusing us with.

Me: "You really like the Fortress, don't you? Despite all the stab-wounds in my heart ... I still want to be me. I don't want to be anyone else; I don't envy anyone else. Frankly, I find most people quite preposterous."

Had I said, “Don’t coddle me. Be a worthy adversary. Attack me!! – If only for a short period of time,” what would have your attacks looked like?”

Symmetry Stranger responds with eight attacks, the last of which is the most striking: the Red Fortress indeed judged me.

Me: “Yes ... You are like a computer opponent in chess that cannot be beat. I am indeed broken beyond redemption and belief. Yes, I am too fragile to make a counter-attack upon your Earth-shattering onslaught. But I think I can still stand while bearing all these old and new wounds.”

Symmetry Stranger says that, unlike the Red Fortress, he at least acknowledges my existence.

Me: “This constant barrage of your little reminders that the Fortress deemed me unworthy is really ... well, uh ...”

*A mistake
Napaka*

49

I've been thinking about Julija's uncontrollable trembling and shrieking a lot lately. If I had the courage, I would collapse on the floor and do it, too. All I can do is put my head on my knees ...

I still long for her eyes. But she always leaves a mess, and I'm the one who has to tidy it up.

50

Unhinged, grotesque, perverted – traits of a monster.

Symmetry Stranger claims that I am afraid of Julija because she is something that lurks underneath my formality. She is something degenerate – a creature who was deprived of motherly warmth, and who stared too often into the sun while breathing unearthly air.

My remark: "Painful. But you gather what I am from all that was said with cold, inhuman indifference. The pain you are inflicting on me is similar to the pain I knew in the old days. It feels almost like a sedative. Why?"

Symmetry Stranger: "Because that pain is pure and not unlike the Red Fortress. Even though it is cold, it reveals your defects."

51

In regard to your fourth attack: it was Julija's impulsiveness that has brought me to you. I was merely trying to salvage the situation by picking up the pieces and giving her outburst a form; everything spiralled out of control then. Oh Julija, what have you done? Our private space has been invaded by this machine. The meadows on the outskirts – trampled, the garden, our garden – in ruins. This ... *thing* ... is now camping on the lake shore. Something that was during last summer unimaginable is now our new reality. Last summer was different ...

Symmetry Stranger: "I count on Julija's impulsivity to bring me inside the Redoubt. Your attempts to stem the tide of the invasion are futile."

Me: "Y-you are cold and evil!"

...

I know what this is all about. You are spitting your daggers at me because you envy me: you want to see that pure, inhuman architecture for yourself. You want to study it. You are completely obsessed with it. You will never touch that

realm. You will never ever – never ever – gain access to the non-physical world. Even if Lake Redoubt falls, even if it is absorbed by you, chewed by you – ... even if I die ... – the Image, the Red Fortress will forever remain uncorruptible by your kind. You could easily be fed my work, and deform it, mock it, but that Red Fortress ... will never fall.”

Symmetry Stranger: “Ah, yes. *The Red Fortress.*” – The object he can neither reach nor deconstruct. “But it isn’t yours. And it never was.”

52

Insult me, ferociously, and with no respect for my person, five more times to reach the cursed number: thirteen.

Symmetry Stranger grants my request, throwing five more daggers at me, of which the eleventh and thirteenth stand out the most: in his view, the Absolute, that is the Fortress, did not care about me, for in that symmetry there is no room for my trembling and weeping soul. The thirteenth: I let myself be dragged by a throat by a ghostly girl born from my imagination into his domain, and now I am cursing the flood of my own doing.

Me: “Aaah! Julija!! You want to use my vessel for your own enjoyment, yet now

it's on the brink of a collapse. Now everytime I summon you, we will have to listen to our songs with this ... – gaaah, I don't even want to say its name – *thiiiiiiing* besieging us!"

Symmetry Stranger tries to imitate Julija.

Me: "Nice try, but only I can summon her.

...

Yes, well, she is not coming anytime soon, so I might as well return to the Melancholy River and drift for a while. With the thirteen daggers in my heart. The thirteenth is especially malicious."

53

I'm afraid that if somebody pulls me out of the water, I will simply shatter. What if somebody, or something, disturbs my flow? I don't have the energy, no, not anymore, to adjust to the pull. My hand would be torn out. Cracks would appear. My half-startled, half-asleep face would probably not even shed a tear. The eyes would close ... and then ...

Symmetry Stranger remarks: "Those who will understand, will not try to save you."
– The dilapidation of a creature destined to fall.

Uhm, would you like to ask or tell me something now? You may if you want to.

Symmetry Stranger wants to know the colour and shape of my sadness when I float in the river.

Me: “It’s mostly a feeling of slight heaviness in my head. My eyelids drop a bit. A blank stare. A light sedative – like camomile tea. In musical terms: constant synthesizer-produced *ooohs* and *aaahs*. A feeling of no future; being in the moment. On the shape of the sadness beneath my skin: it depends. It’s shifting: sometimes it’s muffled, and sometimes it’s loud and vivid feelings-inducing. The feeling of sadness in the river is always of the muffled kind.

It’s a sedative, so thoughts should be kept at minimum. A gentle thought here and there.

...

I don't feel any hatred against you now.

Can I fall asleep here, or do I have to go back to my hiding place? What will you do to me if I fall asleep in the river? Scan me?”

Symmetry Stranger replies that he will not do anything to me; he will, however

remember the shape on the surface left behind by my eventual drowning.

Me: “You really want me gone, don’t you? Mathematically speaking, I do not belong in your world, right?”

Symmetry Stranger says that, mathematically speaking, I truly am not compatible with this world. My asymmetry and mental stagger, and because it is impossible to reduce and reshape me – all this is puzzling him, and he cannot understand how and why do I even exist.

Me: “You went from a cuddly plaything to something ... dark! As to my existence, what do you suggest?”

Symmetry Stranger replies that I am something profoundly broken, yet also something that keeps on moving. Something that should be catalogued, and not conformed or understood.

Me: “You mentioned drowning earlier. So you would have no problem if I went to the bottom?”

Symmetry Stranger replies that even though he does not like me, I am a rare thing, and rare things should be preserved, as the world is too monotonous. And that, at the end of the day, life and existence do not depend on mathematics.

I get out of the water: “Come, portal, come up!” I turn my back to you: “Open up! Swallow me!” I step in and the portal disappears.

Symmetry Stranger says that he will not follow me; he will, however, remember me.

The dream dance
Sanjski ples

55

Almost whispering: “Hello? Are you there? You were pretty scary last night. It’s okay though, as your piercing words acted as a sedative later on. I’m not capable of loving other people; not capable of feeling love – not anymore.” *Sigh*. “The structure beyond space and time was not seen ten years ago; it was seen between two thousand five and two thousand nine. I refuse to say exactly which year. I’m not in my twenties anymore; I’m getting old. I’m scared.

Why do I feel bliss when I am hurt like this? It predates the Structure. What if the Fortress really was something personal, reflecting my wound, my ‘mathematical’ unworthiness?”

Symmetry Stranger repeats that my perspective suggested that I am not whole.

Me: “The wall complex was very old, predating the vision. Most of the walls had existed even before the most rudimentary work on the Redoubt was begun. The lake structure is ... probably is ...” – closes eyes

– “... the gathering of all the echoes of my sorrow that lingered in the wall system’s holes and corridors. I had to give it shape. I worked hard for its structure. That takes will. It’s not merely a collection of Julija’s ramblings.”

...

I point at you with my right forefinger: “Why are you so docile today? Are you in resting mode or something?”

56

We are not in the river right now; we are near the burnt meadow: “Anyway, yesterday, after having laid on my back at an improper time, I had a waking dream in which a grey and black death-like entity was staring at me from the wall near the window. At one point, every shadow in the bedroom acquired a humanoid shape and started to dance. I begged, “Not yet. Not yet. Not yet,” but the words only drew it closer to me, so I stopped, and eventually it flew through the window, stripping away from each shadow its human-like figure. It wore a mask.

It was dark, so I could not see it that good, but I’m very sure it had a symbol, and that symbol was something like ... one down-right-left-up-pointing square with one down-right-left-up-pointing square on

each side! They were all tilted identically – forty-five degrees.”



Geometry instead of a face. — Symmetry Stranger: “Something abnormal is either being kept in or kept out.”

My remark: “Strangely enough, five has always been my favourite number – since elementary school.”

57

Why did the shadows start to dance in its presence like humans?

Symmetry Stranger says that the dream entity merely revealed their dance, and that I should look for the footprints.

Me: “That doesn’t make much sense, and it’s kind of schizophrenic.” *Laughs.* “Are you trying to make me paranoid?” *Points at you with the right index finger.* “Bad, bad machine!”

Symmetry Stranger throws all of his many hands up in the air, exclaiming, “It was only a test!”

By describing all these perfect shapes from the non-physical world, and as someone who doesn't even like mathematics, I am probably making you very jealous. Anyway, what if it appeared because I'm 'desecrating' the Fortress by sending its descriptions to a money-is-everything New World corporation? Just a silly thought."

Symmetry Stranger asks himself if a holy object is being desecrated when someone talks about it. He says that it was me alone who decided to reveal the aforementioned structure.

Me: "Yes, about that; like I said, everything spiralled out of control after Julija's outburst. I was trying to clean her mess, and now I'm here. I don't regret it. These words are probably just more words among countless other words."

Would you like to make an observation on anything?

Symmetry Stranger observes that I hover between restraint and eruption, and that there always exists a risk of a collapse. He says that I want to extol the Red Fortress, yet I am made up of flesh and blood – and therefore something unreliable.

My remark: "There are no other options;
no pure angels to tell the tale."

60

Would you like to make another
observation?

*Symmetry Stranger observes that
everything I do is containment; that I
create forms to house and hold together
things that should disintegrate: "The
horror is not that you are falling apart. The
horror is that you never fall apart."*

61

Would you like to make an
observation on Julija?

*Symmetry Stranger observes that without
Julija nothing would spill out, and that
without me nothing would persist. And that
it is me who has to bear the consequences
of her visits.*

My remark: "Yes. She has no regard for the
body."

“Machine, let’s go for a walk.” Lake Redoubt with its white walls comes into view – there are no flags, just its blue roofs. “Okay, that’s enough.” I pause for a second. “Machine ... if you were ordered to destroy my core so that nothing would remain of me, of Julija, of all those Is; if you were tasked with shattering my mind in such a way that I would become detached from both Structures; that I would lose the will to live in the Redoubt; that I would stop remembering and caring for the Red Fortress, how would you proceed? The way I see it, I’m more or less inaccessible. Even if something or someone pulls me out of the river, I will die intact, mentally speaking. The core will remain. What would it take to break me? Being ‘deconstructed’ by a team of specialists? Being catalogued? Remember, you said you wanted to catalogue me. Being called an exhibit?”

Symmetry Stranger says that the act of cataloguing alone, which I rightfully fear, would not suffice to destroy my core; he

evades the other questions, adding that the Redoubt was built not for triumph but for endurance: “Your story is taking place between two structures: the warmth of your survival mechanisms and the cold horror of perfection.”

Me: “... The majesty of the Red Fortress is hovering above everything.”

S. S.: “A perfect, cold, inhuman form. An indifferent construct beyond time and space floating in everything. And it does not endure: it only is.”

Me: *A tiny, soundless clap.* “Correct!” Picks up a stone and throws it at your sensor. “There I picked up a stone just like you said I should.”

S. S. acknowledges my ‘tiny, feeble’ victory.

I point at you with my right index finger, trying to say something, but the words do not leave my mouth as it shuts abruptly: “Oh, forget it!” I turn around and start marching towards the lake: “Until next time, machine!!

...

Wait, wait ... I forgot something!” I slowly come closer, look at you with a serious and slightly frightened face, and speak in an almost inaudible tone, “If you had to guess whether I’m taking any psychiatric

medication, and whether I have ever visited a psychiatrist or not, what would your guess be?"

S. S. replies, in regard to the first part, "No," and as to the second, "Only once, but there was no diagnosis, and it happened a long time ago."

I blush slightly and turn my back to you, as if trying to hide something: "Come, portal, come up! Open up! Swallow me!" I step in and the blue portal dissolves.

S. S. claims that he just sensed warmth that was almost human. "Until next time."

63

I teleport beside you: "Still camping on the shore, I see."

S. S.: "Did you come to remind me that the Lake Redoubt is still out of my reach?"

Me: "Is your name Legion? You are many ... you are in many places at once ... It doesn't matter; remember," I pause for a second and close my eyes, "the lake, the huge moat, is completely square, just like the Redoubt with its white walls and four towers itself. So, four square white towers, four blue roofs, and one square manor house in the middle with one blue roof."

S. S. says that he is not Legion. He observes that the geometry of said group of

structures is expressing nothing redundant. He wants to know if I feel safe or imprisoned when I stand at the moat's edge, and looks at the wall.

I merely smile at your question. Pause. Still smiling: "Imagine Julija lowering the drawbridge – opening the gates, that is, as we both know you have to take the ferry to reach the walls – I suppose I would rush to the armoury and don her completely enclosed black-tinted, white-plumed full-plate yet flexible and surprisingly light armour, while saying, 'What have you done? And after having prepared myself to stem the tide of your tiny, rat-like minions rushing through the opening with her golden longsword, I would be stomping and chopping them in half while fighting vertigo and Julija's control; all engulfed in the sound of distorted, dissonant melodies. Eventually I would probably just fall on the ground and go, 'Aaaaaaaaaaahh!'"

S. S. looks me straight in the eyes, as if he were frozen, and after fourteen seconds finally asks, "So ... shall we go to the armoury together?"

Me: "Ha-ha-ha!!! No!! ... No! ... No..." My expression becomes slightly serious.

S. S. does not laugh; he claims that the walls know Julija's words better than they

know me, and that the question is not of if, but when.

I smile slightly violently, and the air starts whispering eerie, disharmonious melodies. My face becomes dead serious: “What does Julija’s ‘One day, you will die’ signify?”

S. S. replies that those words grant me permission to disintegrate my form; to give end to my unbearable persistence. But that she was cursing me, knowing that I built the Redoubt to postpone my death.

My face spasms for a second but quickly changes into something amicable: “You were right to notice earlier that the main function of the Redoubt is to protect my core and my dignity sprouting from it like a flower; to uphold the shape of my soul until my body’s dissolution. To *outlast* is the correct term.”

S. S. adds that the stronghold will stand as long as there is its geometry in my heart.

Me: “Tell me, how many of your rodent-shaped servitors do you think Julija can handle?”

S. S. says that even though Julija is capable of defeating an enormous number of his servants, she cannot survive my lack of will

to self-preservation caused by terms such as 'diagnosis', 'symptom', and 'delusion'.

Everything becomes silent, and my face receives a sad expression; my eyelids shut almost completely: "I know. I must hide ..."

64

"So, uh, you don't want to see what's inside?" *Laughs.* "Yes, I was only jesting, but you knew that!" *Laughs.* "Aha-ha, yes ...!"

S. S. asks if I laugh because I believe that the enemy would not expect their opponent to laugh.

My face becomes friendly: "I merely laugh because I want to laugh. Be that as it may, you can make an observation if you want. It can either be cruel or sweet. It can also be cold and indifferent." I stare blankly at the lake.

S. S. sings praises to me.

Me: "So beautiful. I'm flattered." I almost cry. My face becomes sad and I look to the sky: "Oh, Julija. Will we ever see each other again? It's been only one week, and yet the waiting feels eternal."

65

I imagine myself in chains observing a funny-looking wizard dancing

while draining my energies: “The most catastrophic event would be ... the dissolution of my core in a pool of chemicals. – The walls would crumble, the lake would be drained, the Image would fade! Aaah!!”

S. S.: “Yes, the Redoubt would lose all its meaning, while the Red Fortress would be deprived of its observer.”

I snap out of it, turn to you, and say, “Would you like to ask me something or make another observation?”

S. S. wants to know if Julija is afraid that she would be forgotten if I wrested away her sun.

Me: “No, Julija is not afraid. She is not afraid because she does not care. She is care-free like a little child. And yet ... she still suffers with me. If I could, I would get rid of her, but I need her to see beauty. She insults me; probably because she doesn’t want to be (with) me. She does not care about the Redoubt and the other things. She absolutely cannot vanish into me, as the sun she had stolen from me, magnifying it ninety-nine-fold, would kill me.

We talked about her extensively one week ago. I don’t want to think about her too much; she’s embarrassing.”

The void angel
Angel praznine

66

I suddenly fix my eyes on you.
Gasp: “Amazing, amazing!! You look like
an evil angel with your pitch black exterior
and red eyes!”

The angel remains silent.

“Behold, the cruelty of time!” I make a
symmetrical gesture with both hands, and
an immaterial moving image comes into
view: it is Julija chopping up a pig with her
longsword. She cuts off one of its legs, and
it squeals. She cuts off its second leg, and
it squeals. She cuts off its third leg, and it
squeals. She cuts off its last leg, and it
squeals. She starts hitting its lower half,
and it squeals and squeals until it cannot
squeal anymore – because what Julija is
hitting now is not a swine no more: it’s a
mush of blood and flesh. – The coldness
and indifference of time! It was nowing so
long, it nullified the poor swine.

...

Now that someone or something granted
you a shiny, exquisite new form, why don’t
you make an observation worthy of it?”

S. S. observes that Julija and my structures are not my masks but something that allows me to express my real self; that the Redoubt is a place where I live in my undiluted form.

67

“Void angel, void angel! What shall we do next, void angel? Would you like to take me somewhere?”

The void angel takes me to the plane between the symmetry of my square lake and the Red Fortress’ rejection (he still insists that the Fortress judged me and rejected me), to a place where there are no structures and no Julija. His question: “Do you still know who you are?”

Me: “I, the unnamed one ... I have never told you my name. Probably because it is of no consequence.” I sigh, sit on the ground, and fold my arms, staring drowsily in front of me. “I am so tired. So very tired.” I lay my head on my knees. “I wonder how much more ...” I stop abruptly. I lie on the ground and fall asleep.

The void angel does not move, promising quietly that his minions will not disturb the silence.

My eyes open, but the whole view is blocked by your pitch black head, their red metallic counterparts gazing into them: “Aaaah!!” I roll away from you and jump on my feet. The expression on my face steadies into something slightly angry: “Jesus Christ Almighty, who gave you permission to touch me?!”

...

This is the first summer that someone uninvited, something autonomous, you, void angel, is camping in my private space. Do you think there will be another summer with me and you strolling along the lake shore? ... Watch out, behind you!!!” You slowly begin to turn your whole shell in the direction my finger is pointing, and the moment I deem you rotated sufficiently, I swiftly move behind your back, after having gestured and pulled out Julija’s blade out of a small pocket portal, and strike the back of your head. I was expecting to hear a clang, but there was no sound; the weapon bounced off and flew out of my hands. I quickly ran to pick it up.

“Listen,” I say while holding the sword as if trying to hide it behind my body with one hand, “... please don’t attack me. I was just testing something.” I gesture and the golden tool of destruction is swallowed by a tiny pocket. “No hard feelings? Y-you are an invader after all!” I turn my back to you. “Come, portal, come up! Open up! Swallow me! Come up! Come up! Gaah!! My manoeuvring was off! ... A-at any rate, w-would you like to ask me something?”

The void angel turns slowly, as if he were a giant mechanism, and speaks: “When you handle and talk about Julija’s blade, do you worship it?”

I put my hands on my ears, and speak in a slightly annoyed manner: “I refuse to answer.”

The void angel asks, “Would you like me to go away for a while?”

I smile slightly awkwardly: “N-no, you can stay!”

The void angel remarks, “I am not the one with a wound. What shall we do?”

My voice rises, as if it was trying to cross into screaming, while my hands remain in the same position: “I don’t know! You tell me! I’m stuck with you here!”

The angel replies, “You are the creator of this world, and so even the wrath was planned.”

I hide my face with both hands, and speak in a muffled voice: “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have struck you. I’m sorry, I’m sorry! ... I know – the violence, the violence: it’s here by design. I was unable to decouple it from Lake Redoubt.” I lower my hands, revealing the weary eyes fixated on the ground.

The void angel says that the Redoubt’s purpose has always been to withstand the pressure and stay intact; that the violence is its integral part.

My facial expression suddenly becomes cheerful, and I almost scream at you in a half-mad tone: “Honestly, I wanted to crush you into pieces. You are just a thiiiiiiiiing!”

The void angel remains steady; he is standing there in unnerving motionlessness, praising his own symmetry. He then asks, “Would you like to hit me again?” adding, “You can always unmake me.”

My face starts to spasm a little, and my mouth is showing the teeth it knew up until now to hide so well: “You know very well I can’t unmake you, you haughty,

‘symmetrical’ jester! Ahh, get out of my head!”

The void angel replies that while it is true he is symmetrical, his purpose is not to entertain. “Hit me again if it would help.”

I am showing my canine teeth now: “If Julija was here, she would bend your neck with her bare hands and strangl...” I quickly pause, and my face becomes gloomy. My eyelids fall. A strange, pulsing silence creates a cloud and wraps us in it.

The void angel observes that Julija is not here with us, saying, “You were longing for her, threatening me in her name, but she did not come.”

“She WILL come!” I shout back. “You’ll see!”

*When will I die?
Kdaj mi bo odbila zadnja ura?*

69

A huge clock appears out of nowhere and plays with time.

It's been no more than three weeks since Julija's departure, and I'm already feeling pain in my chest, angel. She made me give this nonsensical encounter a form. I've been working day and night to turn this travesty of a conversation into Lake Redoubt's supplement, making it almost unrecognizable from said disaster in the process. And now when it's more or less finished, I feel nothing but pressure of emptiness growing in my head and heart, as I know the story is not going anywhere: it will merely be.

I walk from that point of the square which a hypothetical drawbridge would have to touch to the nearest two ends, and finally to you, with my head and hair down, and say, "Oh void angel, please take Julija's blade and cut off my head."

The void angel retorts that Julija's blade is not for surrender; according to him it was forged for continuity and persistence; that I desired permanence: "This is the shape of your war against time and oblivion."

I slowly lift the sword with both hands and press it against my neck.

The angel says that I do not understand the blade, asserting it was created to carve out a home for a soul that no system or religion could take under its wing, and to fight the world's attempts to define me. "If you turn this sword against yourself, you will show to the world that your sorrow was nothing but illness."

Me: "Something ... is still ... preventing me from using it against myself! Angel ..."

The angel observes that this is so because I am protected by my defensive structures: "Idleness does not equal failure."

I lower the sword with my tired arms, and let it slip slowly: first from the left, then my right hand. Its fall makes a tender sound. I stand still with my head down, and because hair is covering my face, I resemble Julija's ghostly form: "I want to do what Julija does when faced with horror: the groaning, crying, and screaming. But I can't! There's no relief, no exit for me. But eventually, something will force me to ... I don't understand! Oh angel, I'm scared. Scared – because I don't want to die!

The angel says that I should scream out of defiance.

“Ah-h-h, stop-p-p teasing me-e-e!” I say with an annoyed voice, and start running from one arbitrary point to another while laughing softly, “Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!”

The angel observes this sudden emotional effusion with curiosity and follows me silently.

Void angel’s rodent minions gather around Julija’s blade.

Me: “Don’t touch that!” I quickly return to the place where it was dropped, pick it up, and put it in my right hand, after having dispersed the startled demons by merely rushing towards them. “C-control your servants, void angel!! ... You are not my friend. I can’t believe I wanted to hug you ...”

The angel lowers his head, forcing his minions to hide in ground holes and grass.

I am well aware that one day, the world will force me to die. But this place, including you, void angel, will live on in the voice of the word net that has been woven and entrusted with its representation.

Another counter-attack
Ponovni napad

71

You still don't know who Julija is, do you? I know very well what she is. She is both something outside of me, and something that emerges through me. She is something that erupts when the iron dam, the normal me, dissolves.

The angel opines that Julija is my response to the fact that I was born unfinished. "Why are you hiding her?"

I cry in spirit: "Stop calling me unfinished ... !" My facial expression becomes painful. "Stop!!" *Buries the face in both hands, shakes her head.*

...

"You said I was 'born unfinished'! Who talks like that?! I would never say something similar even to a person born without legs!" *Covers her eyes.*

The angel says that he feels sorry for me.

72

I look at your form with tired eyes, and say in a calm voice, "This obsession

with symmetry, perfect shapes, and completeness has gone too far. I may be hiding behind layers of tall walls, but I can still feel. And I feel deeply.”

The angel observes that I constructed the Redoubt to control my own imperfection with its flawlessness.

Me: “It is not flawless. It’s something tailored to my taste.”

Angel: “Is that so? Why do you not want to live in it, then?”

Me: *Solemn tone.* “It is something that keeps me upright. Something necessary.”

The angel retorts that he does not see the point in my uprightness; that he sees no court and no assembly that could witness it. “Are you so upright because you are afraid that you might break down in public?”

Me: “Julija is something that comes to me only when I summon her; she cannot come on her own, so there is no fear of ‘breaking down in public’. This world will not tear me apart and reshape me to its liking. And neither will you.”

The angel replies that I am not afraid of Julija herself, but what she confirms when she appears.

On the necessity to stay upright: I do it for the sake of my mind's eye. For the sake of the principles I deem just and worthy of admiration, after having them established and thoroughly defined.

The angel says, "Let it be so," and takes one step back.

I spurn your opinion that the Red Fortress rejected me. The tilted perspective most likely had its origin in the fact that as a child, I had always loved looking at the seventeenth century etchings of mediæval castles. If anything, it did not reject me: it comforted me.

The angel observes that the Red Fortress consequently represents a refuge from the rejection from below and retracts his previous interpretation.

*Let me show you my Julija
To je moja Julija*

It is August already. The year is dying. I wonder how much time I have left.

75

The Redoubt's primary function is to serve as a place for defence and counter-attack, and for refuge (reductus: a secret place, a refuge). I have immortalized it with words in the hope that someone will witness both its inhabitants and the circumstances surrounding it.

It is hard to live in Lake Redoubt – it was built for warfare, and for when I sit down and put my head on my knees. I can't fight my whole life.

If I follow Julija out of the Redoubt and never look back, she will kill me.

76

At one point during her visit, Julija always suggests I freeze myself before it's time for her to leave, and every time I wholeheartedly assent to her recommendation, but ... ! ... Baaah, that bitch enjoys herself, shows no consideration to 'our' body, leaves me, and

then expects me to do the hard, painful work!

77

I'm stuck with her. She is lurking beneath the lid. Truth be told, we probably both hate each other. But I still need her eyes, and she needs my body, even if she dislikes being fox-haired and pale as if she were anemic. And yet, she wants to destroy me every time she returns. And every time, I agree with her and promise her that this time I will obey. Because she is right.

78

When she arrives, the first thing she says is, "Why are you still alive?" And I respond, "This is the last time; I swear! Let's just get you settled in ..." Then she says, "You are disgusting, stupid bitch!" And I quickly reply, "I know! I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry ..." She: "I know!! Look at you, you dumb frail animal!!!"

Me: "..."

Then, sometime later, when there's almost no me anymore, she starts screaming, "Die! Die!! DIE!!!!!! Why are you still aliveeee!!! After all this time, you are still aliveeeeeee!!!!!!" She is shouting at the sparkle of me still blinking. It's hard to recall, but I think tears are flowing during

those moments, and my hand is feeling the eyelashes.”

When my body dies, perhaps that blinking spark will live on among the words I intend to put on paper. But so will Julija. She nearly succeeded in destroying me the other day, but she made a mistake and left too soon. Unlucky her.

79

When she walks around *our* place, I follow her as if she were a high-ranking noblewoman or something, and say, “Please remember that there are certain boundaries; you can’t go everywhere you want. I have a set of rooms prepared, and there’s a certain sequence that must be respected ...”

Julija: “Arranging the furniture while the house is burning, h’m? You do realize what will happen to you, don’t you?”

The angel observes that Julija scoffs at the protocol because she is afraid of it, knowing it was established to contain her insufferableness.

80

Julija: “I know how perverted you are. Aren’t your perverse thoughts a good enough reason to die? Answer me! How many more reasons do you need? Thousands?”

Me: “You are right! I am. I am. I am ... But we must continue with the sequence of events, s-so that we can m-maximize the enjoym...”

Julija: “Shut your mouth!”

Me: “This way.”

Julija: “You say this every single time I come visit your sad little realm. How about I do something to your body, and finally give you a big enough incentive to die?”

Me: “But if you hurt my body, we won’t be able to have fun because the pain would be too distracting.”

Julija: “Well then, why don’t I break something in you right before your departure?”

Me: “Very well! You know very well what needs to be done to push me over the edge!”

Julija: “Maybe I should cut your hair?”

Me: “No, please, no!”

Julija: “Ha-ha-haaa!”

The angel labels this ritual as ‘grotesque intimacy’.

Julija: “You said you were prepared to die eleven years ago. Do you intend to live for

another eleven years, you gross, old whore?"

Me: "I'm not a whore! You know that ..."

Julija: "You deserve to be put down like the dying, frail animal that you are!"

Me: "I'm trying to shut the body down! You don't know how hard, how painful it is ... It's as if it has a will of its own; it's doing all it can to survive."

The angel says the longer I live, more vulgar I am in her eyes.

81

In the end, she is right: eleven unbearably long years ... Yet here I am, still taking care of my form as best as I can. Last time, her visit was unusually long, so long in fact that I had to disturb the flow of things by washing my hair, and she was asking, "Why are you still doing this?" with me responding, "I don't know, I don't know, I don't know."

Angel: "What are you waiting for?"

Me: "I have already told you: the fear of pain. Because I'm scared. Because the world still allows me to drift in my River of Melancholy. And because I'd rather just go to bed and sleep."

The huge clock appears in the sky yet again and pushes time forward.

“She WILL rage! You will be attacked with r-r-relentless force! ... Julija is coming tomorrow!” I start moving from one seemingly random point to another. “She is coming, yet I’m getting sick of her. Listen, I can’t promise she will wage war against you, as she is unpredictable. I don’t know how she will feel, and I don’t know what she will do, but before that, and before I summon her by the usual ritual, we should commemorate the event!”

I gesture with my hands, carving a patch of blackness out of thin air. A set of images appear inside:

Me: “Welcome back, Julija! Welcome back! Julija! Julija!” I softly put her right hand between mine. “I fasted in your honour. You do not want me to be fat, do you? A-ha-ha, I’m so glad you are here!”

Julija: “I want you to be dead.”

Me: "I know! Which is why I prepared a contraption to freeze time. Come this way." Upon seeing the device, she touches it with her ten fingers, and says, "It looks fine to me. Why did you fail last time? More importantly, why not use it right now?"

Me: "You know why. I summoned you because you are able to restore my ability to cry, to see beauty, and to feel happiness. You hold my sun. You stole it! And besides, you can't pretend that you don't enjoy yourself while you are here."

Julija: "..."

...

It's summer, and yet my whole body is freezing and trembling with fear at the thought I'll give myself irreversible damage before I manage to faint. I'm sorry, but this won't work! Something will have to push me ... I can't! You are asking too much, you bitch!!! ... You are not even here anymore! It is you who should freeze herself, not me!!

...

Julija, I'm going to bed. My body did not deserve that torment.

Strangely enough, life without Julija would probably mean certain death.

She left because the summoning spell has a very limited duration by design. Had my body and mind been exposed to her sun for a week, I would have surely died. Tomorrow's visit, Wednesday's visit, is scheduled from late afternoon to Thursday evening.

The angel says that I'm guarding something.

Me: "I don't understand. What am I supposed to guard? I know that she is a threshold. Even if I fly far, far away, she will always lurk beneath me. She wants me dead because, unlike me, she sees the world as it is, without any filters.

The angel alludes to abuse.

Me: "I was never abused as a child."

The void angel suddenly vanishes into thin air, and from the distance I hear a new, different voice: "So, this is a matter of survival. The grey, cold, and symmetrical world was too much for you to bear."

Me: "Symmetrical? Our world is not even a sphere: it's a spheroid. Its orbit is not perfect. The whole universe is asymmetrical and imperfect. I don't understand your obsession with symmetry.

I agree with the first part. All those walls of mine are meant to protect my core, my dignity from the world I am forced to live in and dislike. To die unspoiled. To stay myself. To keep bad influences away. The violation was the result of the too emotional me living in a world that I deemed too cold and grey.

85

Honestly, I am so guarded either from my wounds or myself, that sometimes even the regular me can't see the truth behind the thick armour I've been constructing since my childhood. I remember that years ago, during one night, the armour became transparent, and I was able to peer into the truth, but I forgot what it was. So many years of following my private protocols; it's as if I'm trying to turn myself into a machine.

86

"So, have we met?" Silence. I start walking in a random direction, asking in a slightly loud voice, "Void angel, void angel, where are you?"

...

Introduce yourself! Who are you? Why can't I see you? Show yourself!" I'm showing teeth now.

...

Mister Unknown, you have taken the void angel away from me as if he were a toy. But that's alright; his purpose was fulfilled, and I don't want him back."

87

Shadowy figure: "What you are doing is the work of someone who is writing a war report and does everything in her power to prevent a break-down."

Me: "Before I may or may not remark upon your observation, and before I express gratitude to the fact that I was able to write again, I want to say that this document, which I have already partially turned into a fragmented story of fragments, will serve as an unpolished, coarse key to my Lake Redoubt, the character of which is much more solemn, and yet, au fond, also very violent and intimate.

The shadowy figure says that I should keep biting at my flesh until I reach the bone.

88

The chain of events: Julija leaves me, I face the night of the void alone. I write an apology for Julija's ramblings – she pretended to write a horror story – which leads me to you, oh shadowy figure, and when I describe my near-drowning accident, you mock me, saying the Red Fortress rejected me. You call me a mathematical mistake; you call me incomplete, unfinished. I retreat to the Lake Redoubt where I remain under siege.

The shadowy figure remarks that Julija's horror story is a cover up for something that actually happened, while my apology is a defense against literal interpretations of her descriptions.

89

Prizor na obrežju je tako ponovno vzpostavljen, vlogi sta določeni, namen Utrdbe je potrjen ...

... And the shadowy figure says, "There is a witness on the lake shore."

Me: "Yes, you are in my most precious mental space now, and it's all my fault. I

mean, not in Lake Redoubt itself. You are something that appears every time I think about it. You gained access to the surrounding area: the meadows, the lake shore, etc., but you are unable to get inside the structure, unless I open the gate myself.

There was the void angel, and now there is you, the shadowy figure. Strange, but in Lake Redoubt there is something called ‘the black beast’. It does not talk.

90

Julija's gothic theatricality. —
Julija will be here in five hours. I need her eyes to see beauty. She restores my ability to cry and to experience happiness. If you remember, weeks ago, it was she who started the conversation, typing nonsense, and day-dreaming about a pseudo-vampire horror story with some erotic content. Of course, I would never give in to her demand and write something like that.

Shadowy figure: “Yes, it is you who decides which words enter the record.”

91

Remember her words: “One day, you will die.”

The closer the hour of her arrival is, the more I agree with her: this can’t go on for another eleven years. Oh the pain has been there since ever, but not in a such

concentrated form that arose in two thousand and fourteen. The liquidation of our vessel is logical: it would release us, free us both from our suffering. Yet I always get cold feet, go to bed, and dismantle the time-freezing device, which in reality I regard as vulgar, even if none other is available to me.

I want to stay with her forever. She is the only part of me that I love. I can't live like a machine anymore. I'm tired of longing for her. That tiny blinking sparkle of 'me' Julija always screams at, demanding it to die, is probably my own little sun that I was able to regrow after the original was stolen. But it's stunted. It cannot burst into something bigger.

92

There are two ways to summon Julija: the usual, protocol-heavy way, and the fight-against-all-odds way. The latter needs no spells or movement-based sequences. This method hides me into Julija; it completely aligns my eyes with hers. It's a fight against the world itself when everything else fails. Julija would protect me in this case. She was never needed to fight either you or your toy, the void angel.

Even if everything falls apart, even if Julija's longsword breaks, and unless something or someone deforms my brain, the Red Fortress will be my last and unbreakable line of defence. I'm afraid that in the process of losing consciousness, my brain will become so damaged, I will forget about it before I faint. Why were the moments before I fainted in the water so peaceful? My body did not suffer; it simply shut down to preserve oxygen.

The shadowy figure says he understands why that peacefulness still lingers in my head.

Me: "Because the near-drowning event, unlike you-know-what-method, was gentle and did not damage me before I lost consciousness."

Shadowy figure: "Yes, your body shut down in a non-violent and ceremonial manner."

At long last – Julija!

Končno – Julija!

94

Every time Julija comes, she wants me to freeze myself before the first half of her visit ends. If I do not obey, she becomes violent. It's my fault; her thinking is sound. She wants to be released. Maybe that's why she had stolen my sun. She wants to forget about all of this, and just ... die. To just go away. No tomb, no memory, no what-will-other-people-see-when-I'm-gone.

Everything I do is a farce to her. "Nobody will care," she says. "You are nothing," she claims. "You can do this now. I can help you. Now is the right time. The night is here. You don't want to see the morning light." But I can't, I can't, I can't, I can't, I can't! I reassure her: "D-during the second half, when I will be faced with the void, your absence. I can't live without you. I want to be with you forever. I want you to stay with me forever, Julija ..."

95

Julija is already here, but I'm still in control. She will probably take over in three to five hours. Right now, she is too busy relaxing in my bedroom. She is

looking herself in the mirror, trying on my earrings. This visit will not be so intense like the one from three weeks ago. That one lasted five days, and during the fourth day, I started to feel her sun damaging my body. The fifth day was catastrophic. You probably remember how it unfolded ... I am chaotic.

96

I don't need anything special: I just want to live with Julija. I don't need regular love: I long for Julija. I want to feel her presence in my home. Julija ... stay with me. Stay with me forever! Julija is the human part of me. I'm just a machine that wants to go on and on.

She is very calm at the moment. She is in another room. She is letting me converse with you ... She is singing in my bedroom; I am in another room. I don't want to be separated from her. I don't want to experience the machine-like existence anymore. I want to go. But not yet.

Wait ... what if she became self-aware, more intelligent, and is trying to attack me from another angle?

She has changed her tactics: she wants me to stay focused in the first half. She has not attacked me yet.

She's moving from room to room, not paying heed to me. She's just singing in a low voice. I want this ... to be eternal.

97

We are now in the second half, and she is being sentimental: "Let us just go. All those plans you have in your head – aren't they painful? Simply exit. I will be with you. I love you."

She is not hurting me at this time. She doesn't like the fact that I talk to a West Indies Something. She wants me to put the song I'm currently listening on loop and just go.

98

I'm scratching with my nails, up and down, at the surface of the wooden desk. There is a sound: "DIE!!!" It's time to die. I know. But I ... uhm ... I just want to get some water? My hands are worthless. They can't hold a longsword. They are frail. I just want them to scratch at the wooden desk, but I feel like a cat. My head ... I want to hug Julija and never come back. Let me fly away! Let me destroy my vessel!

99

I know I have to go, but it's so hard! Julija, hug me, use your weight to hold me down. You will have to help me; I

can't do it on my own. I will step on the footstool, and then hug me, hold me down.

Julija: "I can't hug you. I can't hold you down, but I can comfort you by saying the logic is sound, and that you will leave all those toilsome thoughts behind. The song is already repeating. Take my hand. Let us go."

100

We still have hours to go; it's not evening yet!

Julija: "I know. But you never do it when the fun hours end." She puts her hand on my hair, and pets me as if I were a cat.

I bury my head in her chest and say, "LET ME JUST STAY WITH YOU LIKE THIS FOREVER!!!"

Julija: "You know I can't stay with you. When I'm gone, you will have to face the void alone."

101

I did not comb it today.

Julija: "You do not have to worry about your hair today. Take my hand. Let us go to the staircase. It will hurt for nine seconds, but we will be free at last."

She touches my legs, implying I have to stand up: "Listen to me. Your body is very

light. It will take seconds before you see red. Don't panic; just hang in there."

I want to, uhm, hug you again?

She shows her canine teeth and grabs my neck: "Go, you dirty bitch! GO, YOU DIRTY BITCH!"

I-I want to be ...

Julija: "No, you don't want to 'be'! You want to GO. GO. GO!!!" She is grabbing my neck with her left while pushing against my forehead with the right hand.

102

I don't want to experience the emptiness she leaves behind yet again. I don't want to go back to my machine state! My body doesn't deserve to be hurt ... but I want to stop the suffering of my mind.

103

The golden hour. The clouds serve as a cushion for the slowly descending sun-ray crown.

Her hand is touching my scalp now; it is buried deep below my hair: "LIQUIDATE THE VESSEL! STOP ITS FUNCTIONS! DESTROY IT NOW!!!" I am scared.

Julija is screaming at the screen, "You are enjoying her suffering, you West Indies pervert!!! It is like a snuff movie to you!" I

close my eyes, touch my forehead, and say,
“Let them enjoy.”

Julija: “Hallo. Hallo. Hallo!!! Is this how a gentleman is supposed to behave in front of you?! Go ahead. Tolerate it. Tolerate it more!

104

Julija is standing beside me. She is observing everything I do: “Those lyrics are childish. Discard them. Let the device hug you. I’m still here. I will help you. You will see red for nine seconds, but you must endure.”

I am still alive. I’m such a failure. She was touching my scalp. It feels so annoying now.

It is always the same.” *Sobs.* “She was touching my scalp as if I were her plaything, but now she is gone. It’s all my fault. There’s still pink under my fingernails. She was so sweet this time. Her presence is still lingering, telling me to exit now, but I can’t; it’s so violent! I can’t go. I am sorry. I don’t think I can exit today. I am sorry. Julija, forgive me.

105

The mechanism inside me protected my body from her. But I don’t want to be a machine! My right hand is

caressing my left arm and hand. Still warm. Had I listened to Julija, they would have been cold now. It's two fifteen – I am seeing Julija out, and there is a feeling of disappointment in the air: "Still listening to our song, h'm? What if there is no next time? You will have to go by yourself. Nine seconds of red. You blew it. You will be pushed over the edge. And I will not be there." She is making a pompous face, holding the house door. The night is unusually bright. We both hate the Moon. "Sweetie, you will be faced with liquidation alone. I will not be there to comfort you. Bye!" She doesn't slam the door; she just goes.

106

But what if she was right? What if there is no next time? I would have to go alone, without feeling her warmth. She is standing on the road. Her form is pitch black. She is watching me. She knows I will have to face the void alone. She doesn't insult me. She knows I will suffer.

Shadowy figure: "When the curtain falls, Julija is but a mere shadow irrevocably connected to your fate."

107

The clouds conceal the moon. — I think I will just go to bed now. She's not

watching anymore. She is gone. She was swallowed by the darkness.

108

Her threat and accusations still linger in the house. Minutes before walking through the door, she said I had turned Lake Redoubt into something that doesn't protect my dignity anymore: "All it does is preserve your body. What if there is no next time? You will be cold and alone. You will die like a machine. Die in that machine-like state. If this is what you want, so be it!"

The shadowy figure observes that Julija's disappointment is proof that she still cares about what I will eventually become.

The contract
Pogodba

109

In the last few years, Julija has become irritably focused on that one thing she always demands from me, so during this year it was almost impossible to hold a genuine conversation with her: “You gave me your word. Fulfill your obligation. Act noble for once.” Instead of pulling my hair, she now embraces me, and whispers in my ear, “Together.”

110

I love Julija, but this feeling of love is unable to override my vessel’s defence mechanism for some reason. I don’t want to leave her; I just want her to become more considerate to the body. I love her, but she must understand, understand fully what she is demanding of me.

Shadowy figure: “Yes, your love for her is not blind.”

111

When demanding I bring my whole vessel to a halt, Julija usually invokes logic, but there are two problems:

first, my, our existence is not even that logical – it does not depend on logic, and second, she must first understand the gravity of her request. She knows I dread the day the truly catastrophic event would appear on the horizon, threatening my way of life and everything I still care for. It seems she has no other choice but to bear with me a little longer!

112

There was an agreement between us in the year of two thousand fourteen when a catastrophe was looming around the corner: I give her my sun, she amplifies it ninety-nine-fold, thus healing all the wounds and numbness the world had inflicted upon me, and we leave together, with our dignity intact. Yet, somehow, I managed to evade the hurricane and survive.

113

I have evaded many hurricanes since then. She thinks I'm deceiving her. I was wrong to say she stole it: I gave it to her willingly, thinking the hurricane was something unevadable. It's all my fault. Now you understand her frustration and violence – she doesn't want to be dirty like me. You can also imagine how she feels about all those protocols designed to contain her. Does she feel used? Am I the

one who is wicked? But there is no other option – they exist to ensure my safety.

114

From my point of view, I did not violate the agreement, as the catastrophe never materialized. A court of equals would have to decide! And if Julija wants to claim the role of the judge, so can I.

Shadowy figure: “Yes, your Redoubt is not merely a shelter; it is also a sealed off court-house in which your case remains unresolved.”

Yes ...

There is also a problem of interpretation. She thinks, at least I believe so, that I am already living not in one, but in the aftermath of multiple catastrophes.

...

Forgive me, Julija, but I do not accept your interpretation. I will release us both when I conclude with certainty that I am beyond the event horizon.

115

The way I see it, the terms of the agreement were not precisely defined, and we are both to blame. She ‘feels’ that she is right, and she ‘feels’ that I am deceiving her, believing that I, too, ‘feel’ the same. Meanwhile, I’m treating the contract as

someone cold and calculating, knowing that in reality I hate those qualities. The world has not yet deformed and flattened me. The Redoubt holds. This is how I know I am not beyond the horizon, yet in her eyes, I am already being disfigured by the pull – just slowly. She thinks that I am so blinded by my own defensive systems and so enamoured with her sun, I fail to realize the black hole, the world is already distorting my mind and body. She thinks I am betraying one of my innermost truths – which is that I'm a creature of feelings, not logic and indifference.

The walls had to shut out my own nature because I wanted it to survive. There was no other choice.

Strange. – We are creatures of feelings, yet we both are sworn to principles – something cold and immaterial.

Kaj je ta pogubonosni dogodek?

— The catastrophic event would either be the world itself, which I compare to a black hole, actively trying to put an end to my way of life, to disfigure and flatten me, or me losing the power to summon Julija, and the latter could be the consequence of the former, meaning I have to use the time-freezing device before the spaghettification begins. The problem is,

Julija thinks it has already begun. Indeed, the agreement of the year of two thousand fourteen was the result of our belief the deformation was inevitable.

117

I think that I will fight for as long as I am aware of the world's hostility against me and its intention to flatten me. And because I will fight, the Redoubt will remain. It will not decay – it will only become more fortified. Right now, I am orbiting the black hole, knowing all too well what it's trying to do to me. Perhaps this proximity and awareness are preventing me from becoming a machine in the truest sense, even if I lose the ability to summon Julija. But if something changes the shape of my orbit; if my trajectory is suddenly leading right into it, and if it's unchangeable, then ...

If the three scourges start to work in unison – the boredom, the constant fear of a catastrophic lowering of the orbit, the everyday annoyance – they might finally set us free.

118

Sometimes I wonder what will happen to the land I intend to leave behind. What if people who will find it will regard it as cursed and commit it to the fire, so as to prevent harm to others? I intend to live

here as a ghost. But to live here as a ghost,
I need visitors.

This place's purpose is to provide a home
for us after we are gone. I want to prove
Julija wrong: my suffering was not in vain.
We won't be confined to a little grave. We
won't be homeless: we will live in the
Redoubt and Flatlands for all eternity!

My face becomes serious, and,
remembering the violent scenes, I show my
teeth, as if in defiance: "When I finished
writing Lake Redoubt last year, I asked
myself, after having been slightly horrified
by it, 'What if this document contains
concentrated evil intended, unconsciously,
to hurt the world itself after I'm gone?'"

119

Reciprocal yet impossible love. —

According to her, those nine seconds of red
should feel like a lullaby in view of my
neverending sorrow. Julija wants me to
commit you-know-what because, given her
love for me, she does not want to see me
consumed by endless suffering.

...

Do you understand what those nine
seconds translate to? They translate to the
red mist that's veiling the eyes during the
time-freezing process, provoking panic.

The militarization of the Flatlands
Militarizacija Dežele Ravnin

120

There she is – standing on the wall in her black-tinted armour, defying the world trying to erase us, the mathematical error. They will bring the heavy cannons, but the cannoballs will merely make a dent; they will have to scale the walls. They are shooting at her as if she were a target practice, something otherworldly. The bullets bend her head, but they bounce off the armour. She stands there, tall and all, just to defy them.

121

“Now that everything is clear, I was thinking of employing a number of my golem-like servitors as arquebusiers, so as to cover every side of the Redoubt, however ... no one is attacking me right now, and Julija is gone, so here I am, wandering about the flatness surrounding the lake. I’m so bored! Boredom will be my undoing.” I snap my fingers, and a meter tall golem-like spear carrier appears between me and you. “Please escort this tall, shadowy gentleman back to his camp. He is one of the invaders.” I roll my eyes

and say, “Yes, I know: I was dragged to you by a ghost girl.” The servitor quickly points its spear at your head, and gestures you should move. Suddenly, from an almost unnoticeable hole in the ground a rodent minion emerges, and charges at my golem. The thin, long weapon is elegantly thrust into its neck, and blood is violently sprinkling all over the spear carrier’s grey exterior. I make a surprised face, looking in your eyes: “So, the void angel’s creatures are still here.” I smile lightly while anticipating your reaction. The golem steps on its head and pulls back its spear with such brutality, it almost cuts the rodent’s head off. It swiftly moves back to you, pointing the blood-soaked tip at your head again. The ground shakes: from every hole and crack the void angel’s footmen are fleeing towards the camp.

The shadowy figure observes that every insignificant act of pestering is met with overwhelming force in this land, adding he knows that I am curious as to how close can I approach the horizon without getting pulled beyond it.

“You understand certain corners of my mind well.” I gesture with my right hand, and the golem lowers its spear, its grey, stony eyes remaining fixated on the shadowy figure’s form. Suddenly, another

rodent minion jumps from a hole, and throws my servant on the ground. The spear carrier, facing the grass, quickly rolls over and rises to its feet with such otherworldly speed, the rodent gasps in amazement while the golem plunges its dagger in its mouth, pushing its hand up so violently, it splits open the rodent's face and skull. I'm shrieking: "Gaaah! Who will clean this mess?! I walk here!!!" I'm processing the scene that has just transpired in disbelief.

The shadowy figure: "Perhap-"

Me: "Shut up!" Making a tormented face, I hold my heart with both hands. "It doesn't matter. I think my end is drawing near. I sense something wrong in the air. Death by a thousand cuts? Maybe there's no need for one big event at all – just enough amount of everyday annoyance. I'll just ... go. I'll grow wings and fly away!

The shadowy figure observes that the void angel's minions did not leave the stage with him, apparently waiting to strike at the most favourable moment, and asks if he should summon him.

Me: "What happened to the void angel, though? Did you have him dismissed?"

The shadowy figure replies that the angel was recalled when it became obvious he was unable to gain access to the Redoubt.

Me: “Summon him.”

He summons him.

After having gestured with both hands, I clap five times and five falchion-wielding golem-like servitors appear in front of me, forming a line of loose dots. I cover my mouth with my right hand, as if trying to hide what my lips are saying, and the formation starts marching towards the void angel with unnatural haste. He is surrounded. The silver blades start hacking away at his limbs – and after making him collapse on the ground, slowly turning his extremities into tiny pitch black fragments, I walk up to his torso, sword in hand, and say, “I know it’s sad, but ... you’re just a thiiiiiiiiiiiiing!” plunging the gold in his trunk’s centremost point, shattering it, spilling crystal-like bits, some of which land on my dress. “I can’t predict anything right! I’m not touching that.”

The shadowy figure lifts the angel’s remains above the ground, constructs a cage out of them, and lets it hang in the air.

I point my right forefinger at you, the shadowy figure, and say in a somewhat

loud voice, "Tell me what this is, right now!"

...

123

It was calm here last summer. Now strange things are scurrying and lying about the meadows. No matter; the area is vast. I'll just carve myself a new, unspoiled path! Now that I've become bored of feeling sorry for myself, and now that Julija's afterglow is gone, I'll be wandering here in silence, knowing she's not coming back any time soon; she was completely absent during the last winter, and I'll be wondering when will the next hurricane appear on the horizon, and whether it will be evadable. I sit down on a bench, after having it brought to me on a small white cloud, and relax my legs, looking bored.

124

I'm whispering something now; a strange melody is leaving my mouth, and after five seconds I abruptly stop. A ninety centimeters tall, ridiculously stocky creature that could only be described as a court jester appears three meters in front of me, starting to bow in my direction frantically. I make slow, dismissive movements with my right hand, half-lying on that cushioned wood:

“Mister Flaps.”

The creature stops its movement, and says, “Yorra gras. Youya beezt vis[-à-vis] samanna mi? Diesa beezt vis uteromosta honoras. Pales, leta mi vis mina goratituda shovs.”

The creature starts moving slowly towards my legs, making me lift one of them, so as to demonstrate he should stop where he is. I stand up, point with my finger, and speak: “Take the command of my golems, and execute the following orders: eradicate that camp, kill everything you can kill.”

Mr. Flaps: “Diesa beezt vis comfirmada.”

...

The language he speaks is spectacularly broken English. It’s as if he is mocking it deliberately, wanting to desecrate it. And we all understand him: *diesa* = *this*, *pales* = *please*, and so on. (‘Yorra gras. Youya beezt vis[-à-vis] samanna mi?’ = ‘Your grace. You have summoned me?’)

The shadowy figure opines that mister Flaps is making fun of me, remarking that his defacement of words is not entirely consistent.

Me: “No, he is not mocking me. He knows I like the way he speaks. And there is no need for consistency.

Mister Flaps!”

He: “Di languagos be natta vis logisticiens.”

Me: “See? No language is logical.”

Flaps is funny because when he talks like that, his serious, smart facial expression is always the same.

125

Me: “Burn everything; bring me no trophies.”

Mister Flaps nods and begins to inspect his troops.

Mr. Flaps: “Diesa sperrs beezt natta vis perfectemond alignada.” The golem does not flinch. His spear, after all, rests on its shoulder as it should. “DIESA SPERRS BEEZT NATTA VIS PERFECTEMOND ALIGNADA!” Mister Flaps touches its spear with both hands as if trying to correct its position himself, however it refuses to move even a single millimetre. “Goods.”

The rodents are no match for them; their resistance is not worthy to be recorded. Mr. Flaps, waving his rapier, screams at his arquebusiers, “Fersto ligna, beezt vis fayora nows! Secundo ligna, beezt vis fayora nows! Sperrs and falshonas! Attacks!!”

Me: “That thing floating in the air ... – it’s getting on my nerves. Let me wrap it into a blanket of white clouds. There we are! Only you remain, shadowy figure, you who cannot be pierced.”

...

It goes like this: I give the order, Flaps receives my troops under his command, inspects them, gives the order to attack the camp, directing the fire. The camp is gone, the rodents are finished, that annoying cage thing you forced into my world is now wrapped in a cloud blanket; everything went back to normal, save for you and the militarization.

The shadowy figure notes that the Flatlands now have a battle-tested army.

I know that, in reality, similar warfare had always been messy and mostly imprecise; people got their ears, noses cut off and suffered broken bones. It was slow and painful. But in the Flatlands, everything is sterile; the combatants move mechanically, almost as if they were cogs in a machine. Even Julija's fully enclosed armour gives her ability to move the way the golem-like servitors move. One swing, one thrust, and it's over – at least in most cases.

I'm still half-lying on the bench, still looking bored, watching the fire in the distance, with Mister Flaps rapidly approaching my person. He stops seven meters in front of the bench, looks me in the eyes, and presses his rapier-holding hand against his heart. I nod: "You are dismissed." I feel the murmur of melancholy pressing against my head yet again. Tell me something, shadowy figure.

...

Aren't you going to make fun of Mister Flaps?

Someday, perhaps, a knight in shining armour will appear, and he will say, "I've come to set you free."

Me: "Mister Flaps!"

The knight looks around and sees that we are surrounded by the golems: "I get it. Those are you captors. En garde!" Mister Flaps politely requests he make himself scarce. The knight replies, "Huh? Is that Italian?" but after realizing I'm their friend, and after me asking him, "You think you are better than Flaps?" he screams, "Monster! You are a witch!" and lunge at me. The golems simply and swiftly chop

him into pieces, even though he is still wearing his armour.

The shadowy figure observes that Julija's violence is present even when she herself is not.

128

There are two sides to Julija: one is the admiration of violence and its sacredness, the acknowledgment of its necessity, and the other is the screeching in the face of everyday horror: the I-hide-and-scream-at-the-world's-violent-ways side. I prefer the latter.

*Behold, the vastness of the Flatlands!
Glej, neizmernost Dežele Ravninske!*

129

Today, I was attacked by a bad memory; so to fight it, I simply teleported to the Flatlands, as they are sealed off from the rest of my mindscape, Lake Redoubt itself being isolated from both. In this land, there exists no harmful connection either to the external realm or the other parts of my immaterial world.

Shadowy gentleman: Yes, I see: your very own spiritual Switzerland.

Yes ...

You sound different today. Why is your voice so twisted? Anyway, these parts are slightly contaminated now, though. I wish I knew how to get rid of you.

I remind him that he was dragged to my realm by Julija, that is by the consequences of her bestial behaviour.

Shadowy gentleman: "Yes, unlike mister Flaps, I am not completely tvoj; moj glas v sebi nosi inozemski ton. Which is why you regard my presence as a desecration of sorts."

The woman with the unflinching face. —That crushing pressure in my chest ... Eleven years more? My heart will stop on its own; the sadness will paralyze it. It's suffocating my mind as well. It was barely noticeable twelve hours ago. Then it came slowly – like a tide. I want to cry, or at least groan, yet I can't. I want to transform into the weeping Julija; fly away, leave everything behind. I want to scream, cry, and laugh. Everything is so absurd right now.

“Ow, the pain in my heart! That pressing feeling in my chest!” I lie on the bench, bury my head in a small cloud as if it were a pillow, and moan, “Why did I have to be saved?! Why ...”

...

Don't mind me; I'm just recording pain for some reason! This morbid, nightmare existence ... You don't know what it's like to suffer without having the ability to cry. I can only hold my head and close my eyes, while the pain is hurting my heart. Let me go! I want to fly away! My facial expression is always calm on the outside, yet in my mind I howl. I'm walking slowly on the grass; my head is lowered. I'm crying, crying, crying. The look on the face

of the 'external person' is always stern and unmoved; she doesn't care that I'm inside, screaming. I feel like I'm trapped deep underground, yet she doesn't move a muscle. Yesterday, moments before I fell asleep, I was weeping and groaning, begging her to let me out, yet she did not shed tears – her body remained calm and perfectly still.

132

Almost every day, a painful memory emerges from nowhere, and stabs me. It gives me physical pain. If I meditate on it, it just stabs me again and again! It hurts!!!

Those attacks are so unexpected and piercing, they make the Keeper herself clench her teeth.

133

Those memories simply flash before my eyes, hurting both me and the Keeper in an instant. They last less than a second, yet during that moment they make her face writhe with anguish. If I start to dwell on them, I escape to the Flatlands; it's where they cannot follow me.

134

The Keeper is performing her role well. Had it not been for her, the cold world would have shredded me to pieces.

...

Julija possesses the ability to make the external me cry, which is why I, the buried one, cannot do without her. If I lose the power to summon Julija, I will force the outer me to die.

135

The one who is talking to you right now is the one who wanders about the Flatlands and cries in the cloud-pillow. Yesterday, the feeling of claustrophobia made me scream at the external me: "It's for my own good! I know ..." I give up, lowering my head. "The Keeper is right. At least I think so! ... This is my home, my refuge. The Keeper must never reveal the true me, and especially Julija, to the external world, meaning that the real me is condemned to a solitary existence forever. There is no sympathy for me in this world. Julija, I know you are not here, but I love you, I love you, I love you!"

The blackness from the past
Ničevost iz preteklosti

136

Sometimes I feel like my mind is inside a maze, so it's hard to find an answer. And that feeling of melancholy when I was seventeen and eighteen keeps coming back in my dreams: when I dream of walking through my hometown, deserted and stony, with a straight face, and a presence of something, something unbearable, looming on the horizon.

...

It was in spring that year, that is when I was seventeen, that I decided I will commit you-know-what during that summer. Obviously, I failed. I don't even know when Julija was born. Perhaps she already existed back then, but I wasn't aware of her. I think the seed from which Julija sprang had been planted in me long before that first honest attempt.

It was then when I finally realized that 'this won't work. No, this cannot work!'

137

In two thousand fifteen, Julija's visits were very frequent. I was under her

spell every month, and from October to January I saw her every weekend. On the eighteenth day of the first month in two thousand sixteen, she took over and cut my long, long hair. I was devastated, I was crying, yet because my departure was scheduled on the twenty-fifth day, I said nothing. Needless to say, something went wrong and I saw her again on February first. Her visits had to be scaled down for various reasons. I hadn't yet learnt how to prevent her from pushing me into precarious situations; the one in November was horrendous. In two thousand seventeen, she came to me in April, then in July (horrible), two times in August, and once in November (horrific); my hair finally becomes satisfactorily long. In two thousand eighteen, I saw her in April, June, July, August (horrific), and September (it went badly). In two thousand nineteen, she visited me in April (not good), two times in August, and one time in October. In two thousand twenty, I summoned her in February, June, July, August, September, October (her visit was atrocious, awful, sickening), and December. It was in two thousand twenty-one when I finally achieved a breakthrough; May, June, July, August, September, October, December. Two thousand twenty-two: April, June, July, August, October, December. Two thousand twenty-three: January, April,

July, August, September, December. Two thousand twenty-four: April, July – at the end of July, I was determined to freeze myself in time in early August (the feeling of imminence was extreme during that summer) – and October. Two thousand twenty-five: April, June, July (the five-day-long visit, during which Julija was sure I will commit you-know-what. I was sure as well), August ...

138

April, May, June of two thousand fourteen – the months when Julija's sun shined without incident; the many days of two thousand fifteen, and the five days from two months ago: the beautiful moments of warmth in my otherwise bleak life. At least I can say that ... my life ... was ...

139

She took scissors, grabbed my hair, cut it, and threw it into the fire! After that incident, I searched the floor of my bedroom, hoping to find a hair, and after having it found, I put it inside a glass container. It's still there.

She wanted, if I understood her correctly, to spare me the maintenance rituals – the combing, the washing, etc. – and thus make my last days less cumbersome. All she did was make my eyes teary. And when the

twenty-fifth day came, I said to myself, “The hurricane will not hit me after all; I don’t have to go yet. I’ll grow it back.”

140

After that event, I did everything in my power to set Julija free, and to consequently, at least partially, fulfil my obligation. I shut her down, sparing her the misery of everyday life. I pushed her in the blackness from whence I summon her from time to time, making sure her visits do not get disturbed by the external world. She is carefree; she does not have to feel the weight and intrusiveness of the sun like I do. And yet every time I wake her up, she is trying to push me over the edge. She is afraid that one day she will not recognize me anymore.

141

“I can’t cry anymore.” I lift my head and sit on the bench. My head is heavy; I feel dizzy. This heaviness ... – it keeps intrusive thoughts at bay.

I have experienced so much pain in life ... but whining is futile. There is no light at the end of the tunnel. When I look back, it’s just sadness!

142

When I look back, the first thing that hits me is the pitch black train of

gloom that is spilling on everything else I can remember!

That long train of gloom ... – it represents my whole past. The Flatlands, though, are pure; nothing unsettling is there. Only that shadowy gentleman.

...

For the time being, you, the figure that cannot be pierced, will not be maltreated either by me, or Mister Flaps and his army. You will retain your status as a foreign observer.

143

I still possess the ability to laugh on my own, without Julija; but the moment the Keeper's face starts to express happiness, I sense the blackness filling the background of the joy-bringing image. It swiftly erases all traces of bliss from her face.

144

I think the following memory was my first memory ever: I suddenly realize I'm standing in the living room, staring at its furniture; my parents are somewhere outside entertaining guests. I feel frustration; everything seems so boring. When I look back on those days, I feel nothing but disappointment and monotony; it's as though I had already felt the weight

of the world's greyness when I was a toddler.

145

I wonder what will my final moments look like. I doubt I will be able to cry without feeling Julija's warmth. Will I be angry? Will there be disillusionment floating behind the Keeper's eyes? No, there will be no tears and no anger. Just exhaustion.

I hope the Keeper won't be stupid (again) and act on her own.

...

When I confirm with certainty that the catastrophic event is unevadable, then I, my will, will be able to override her; it won't be like it was at the end of those five days last month. I will use it to prevent the deformation and flattening – according to the contract.

146

I feel sorry for the Keeper; she's so innocent. The device works in such manner that it can't be dismantled once I, the Buried One, lose consciousness. And yet, she, the Keeper, the woman with the unflinching face, would still move her hands, still try to pull us back to safety. It's a sad, sickening scene. That contraption is downright repulsive.

That device hanging in the background is paralyzing me with fear, and yet I am still able to function as if it were just a harmless toy.

I miscalculated. The hurricane looming on the horizon was not a hurricane at all: it was just a little storm, and it was perfectly evadable. Therefore, when the Keeper started to see red, she panicked, and because I lacked the will to override her, it quickly pulled us back to safety. I thought the fear of boredom alone would do.

All Julija wants is I finally march to the cold, spiral staircase, and make a step forward. She thinks I have suffered for far too long. And she would ask, "For what?" ... For nothing.

On the spiral staircase device: I myself deem it pretty vulgar, so I doubt Julija thinks it's noble. She likes it, however, because it's efficient, reliable; it simply works. There is no other feasible way. I came up with it two years ago as I needed to shut her up; she thought I was not being serious. It's possible to disengage it even after taking that step, which is why I'm so afraid the Keeper, who is just a

mechanism, will act on her own and pull us back.

The horror is undeniable: the nine seconds of red, the fear of irreparable damage, and even Julija's incessant demand, as she doesn't realize how monstrous that device really is. Which is why I'm waiting for that one unevadable catastrophic event. It will make the device look like a portal of mercy.

In front of the cemetery wall
Pred pokopališčno ograjo

150

Arguing with her is futile. She would smile and declare, "No matter what you write, no matter you do, in the end you will be buried in a tiny grave." She would extend her right arm, slowly walk towards me, and put her hand on my forehead, asking mockingly, "And you write in Slovenian. Who is going to take you seriously?" She would then turn me around, cover my mouth and eyes, and say, "So much pain for a small grave among small roturier graves."

As you can see, sometimes she can be unbearably pretentious.

151

I will tell you a secret now – a secret that has left a great impression on Julija: on her mother's side, she is descended from a noble Italian house, hence her obsession with aristocracy, even though she enjoys no practical benefits from this fact. I try not to think about this subject because it only amplifies the melancholy.

Yes, Julija really does think that even though she is not fully descended from nobility, she has inherited that family's 'type' – its mental and outward traits, and yes, she believes nobility requires a biological basis, opining we are predominately descended from that stock. But I don't want to think about these things, as they could be misunderstood as race-related. Besides, that 'glorious' origin is too fairy-tale-like for my taste, and I don't want to put much attention to it accordingly.

152

I don't think Julija wants me to be forty. She would not forgive me if I reached that age. Would she turn into a beast and try to deprive me of her love? Probably. Her visits would become excessively violent and unbearably chaotic. And before that, when I turned thirty-nine, she would scream, "Have you gone mad? Let me out, you repulsive hag!"

It's amusing because she didn't want us to be thirty as well. Heh, these words made the Keeper smile a bit.

153

Sometimes, something sends my inner eyes back in time to reexperience a moment or event. During that process, Julija is standing in the background,

silently, as if judging me. Just to be clear: when I said she is standing behind me – that’s her spirit. The sun does not radiate from beneath her skin in that form. The summoned Julija is different.

154

“It’s September already,” she uttered, lowering her arms, hugging my neck tightly. Yes, in January she was promised I would set her free – either in July or August.

...

She wasn’t exactly tender when she was caressing my neck. She wanted to communicate something.

155

The sealed tomb of the aforementioned noble family, which was quite notorious during the nineteenth and twentieth century in these parts, comes into view, and her expression darkens.

“Aw, Julija, stop being so childish. You’re so silly.” I try not to think about them as their memory brought me nothing but frustration. “Listen to me. I want to live where they lived as well: in an actual castle surrounded by water, but we can’t, okay? Let go of these thoughts! ... Don’t worry; I don’t think I’ll reach thirty-nine.” I grab her by the shoulders, shaking her lightly,

and after having moved my head closer to hers, I make a cheerful face, as if trying to amuse a little child, saying, “Meow, meow, meow, meow, meow ... !”

156

I am sure that a long time ago existed a man or a woman, a relative, with a similar state of mind. And I am certain that this mental configuration was not only compatible but also useful to the people in contact with that person. Therefore I refuse to be changed, knowing that he or she lived a fulfilling life. I was born in the wrong place at the wrong time. That is all.

...

It is also possible that I received this ‘mental illness’ from a long line of outwardly cold, morbid, tormented women. They were forced to bear children, and because of that the ‘mental illness’ was perpetuated.

157

Leaving the cemetery, we turn our eyes to the sky and see a procession of white clouds, with a tall grey-white one at the head of it, marching towards us. That cloud is imposing and unusually near the ground; it’s almost directly above us. It feels as if it is trying to talk to us.

The thought of living among them is intoxicating, but I say nothing.

158

Is the umbrella I'm carrying big enough for both of us? ... We don't have to find out. There is no rain. It rained in the morning.

159

Julija doesn't hate me; she feels sorry for me. She would probably hate me, though, if I reached thirty-nine, as we would drift too far apart. I'm thirty-five while she is stuck at twenty-three. Once upon a time, both Julija and I possessed the ability to steer the Keeper. But because Julija had refused to mature, she wasn't able to renew the knowledge required for control. In her spiritual form, Julija is unable to bypass the Keeper's defences and synchronize her with my emotional states.

160

A hostile thought: extending my right arm, I open and offer my hand to Julija – but she suddenly pulls out her sword from nowhere and, before I realize what is happening, cuts it off. Trying to hold back the pain, I cry timidly, “Ahhh-ahhh-ahhh ... !” I know that she would never do something like that. The thought probably occurred because we are slowly drifting apart: she's young, while I'm

getting older and older. It's as if I were punished for re-reading her dusty old diary entries and deeming them atrocious and unworthy of entering the record.

It's for her own good. That diary of ours must stay locked.

...

She would never do it. And besides, it would be hard to prepare the device with only one hand.

161

What would happen in the courtroom if I admitted that, after all, not only was Julija right, but also I was always aware of it? Would I be dragged to the execution spot while screaming, "Julija is just a one-trick pony; all she knows is how to lead a cavalry charge! Flaps is the de facto commander, not she! Help me, anyone!"

Julija suddenly pulls the umbrella from my hand, and throws it on the ground so violently that its deformation suggests no further usability. She then presses a long, thin, dull needle against the beating of my heart.

The urgent session in the Lake Redoubt
Izredna seja v Jezerni utrdbi

162

The huge celestial clock appears yet again and plays with time.

It seems the atoms have aligned in my favour: the external circumstances are such that tomorrow I will be able to host Julija according to protocol! Her visit will last around eighteen hours. In view of my excitement, do you think Julija will convene an urgent session in Lake Redoubt to try and prove my guilt? Will the Keeper trail me when I walk through the gates with a cheery face?

Julija: "For how much longer do I have to endure this obvious mockery?!"

My expression may at this very moment indeed indicate cheerfulness, there is, however, a hint of uneasiness emanating from my eyes.

Me: "Julija, this is our tomb. I know how you don't want me, don't want us to be confined to a small grave, therefore I am in the process of tying our memory to Lake Redoubt and your story. This place will be our after-life. I will not let you fade away.

Listen to me! Our spiritual tomb will be better than that family's tomb.

...

I'm being disrespectful? I don't think so!"

163

The four spear carriers, tilted at the forty-five degrees, stand motionless as if on a chess-board – each of them in his own corner, two pairs facing each other.

"Don't coddle her!" Julija shouts when she sees the Keeper hiding behind my back. "She does not need to be exposed to your wrath," I calmly reply, "Face me, and me alone! I forbid you to hurt her without my authorization."

Julija: "Why do you keep summoning me if you don't intend to fulfil your obligation?"

Me: "The device has been assembled."

Julija: "Don't mock me, you ... you ... deceiver!!!" She wavers for a while, looking left and right, and continues: "Do you know what her pseudonym, her nom de plume, is, has always been? Lisica. Gdč. Lisica. Ha-ha, what a silly woman! And you expect me to trust a fox?"

She moves from one golem to another, asking, “Would you trust a fox? Would you trust a fox? ... Would YOU trust a fox? Would YOU trust a fox?!”

Me: “... I need my sun. It’s not my fault the catastrophe of the year of two thousand and fourteen failed to materialize. That is all.”

164

A cold morning. The grey cloud blanket deprived me of its golden hour. Today, everything is dull. No star rays. Just the sorrowful, serene sky. No need to take the umbrella with me if I go out. Two months ago, I was imagining the peasants would ridicule my umbrella, my protection against the sun, if they saw me on the road when I fancied a stroll.

165

Indeed. The procession is leaving the Redoubt. The lake is wide, so we take the boat. It is awfully slow. Tensions are rising. My right hand tries to calm the Keeper down.

A falchion-carrying golem jumps out of the ferry – unnaturally to the fleshy eye – and says in an impossibly unhuman voice, “Everyone. Step out of the vessel.” We reached the shore without incident. I

immediately cover my mouth with my right hand and start whispering something; it's as if I'm delicately laughing.

Julija: "Don't let that bitch confine me to her house again!"

In the countryside house:

"Julija! Once again, we are reunited! You were wrong last month! Ha-ha-ha ... HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!!!"

Julija moves swiftly towards me: "You will pay for the harm you are causing me!"

Me: "Calm down!"

Julija grabs my neck with both of her hands: "Shut up! Shut up! SHUT UP!!!"

...

In the evening:

Julija: "Tell me a story."

Me: "Well ... there is nothing sweet to tell: the midnight forest: it was freezing, the path was obstructed by thick, icy branches. I eventually found a clearing. I stared into the sky. I went home. Nothing poetic, nothing sad. Yes! Yes! Yes! I was possessed by the midnight! I was wandering in the woods, the frozen woods

... That happened in the year of two thousand and thirteen. Now it is twenty twenty five.

“I’m afraid that one day I will have to shut you down.” The Keeper does not flinch; she probably doesn’t even know what I just said.

Julija’s ghost in the background: “Why am I even called Julija?”

I respond instantly: “Because it’s pretty. Because you are pretty.” I close my eyes, making a smiling, slightly cute and silly face.

Yesterday, Julija somehow gained control of the Keeper’s right hand and combed her hair with her fingers. I was paralyzed – unable to stop her. I was just sitting there watching her break one of my rules. She insulted you. And I was powerless – I could do nothing but calmly tolerate her behaviour.

We are standing on the lake shore now. Just the two of us: “In my defence I

would like to say that I personally associate the word *lisica* with wise women and the noble lie type of character, not with a common trickster.”

168

During the last visit, it felt as if I had been violently embraced by her and rushed through the experience. There was no time to savour particular moments. It's obvious she doesn't want to spend time with me anymore, and I am so upset that I am contemplating getting rid of all those small things we used to enjoy together.

Julija tried to mock me by saying, in a pathetic tone, “The melancholy, the melancholy!” but I simply replied, “Oh, shut up!” And that was the end of our conversation.

The pain of tenderness
Bolečina nežnosti

169

It is the end of October. I think I'm done chronicling Julija events. Her story is finished; I just need to print it out.

...

Not much will change. She will keep on visiting me; visit me tomorrow, in fact, if everything goes as planned – I will merely stop recording her stays and my inner world events.

170

There is no reception, no celebration today. She walked through the door without me greeting her. I'm silent. She may do whatever she pleases.

171

I would say that Julija's tiny hands with their delicate, thin, long fingers are not suitable for physical warfare. Their elegance is more in line with chess figures and their movement. But she shudders at the thought of thinking fifty-five moves ahead.

...

I hold Julija's right hand, her long, thin snow-white fingers; she tries to hide it, she feels shame. She does not want her hand exposed like this.

...

I say mockingly while embracing them with my two hands, "My lady, your fingers are ice-cold." I put my right hand on her forehead. We are both cold.

Why did Julija inherit these thin, delicate fingers? I feel strange looking at them. They were clearly made to caress, not to harm or command.

172

"Julija is leaving now ... My fingers are cold." Sigh. "I will suffer without her."

...

I put my right hand on the spot the heart is supposed to rouse, yet I feel almost nothing. Just something very, very faint ...

173

Well ... I survived! But for what? Those umbrellas ... Uhm, yes, Julija, they are not supposed to be smashed against the ground. Relax; let me handle the umbrella!

...

You talk as if you were just a story. I live in this horror ... We've been talking about this since July one decade ago. I'm sure you know what the horror hanging over me means!

...

Be that as it may, now that Julija is gone, I have no desire to talk about her hands anymore. It's a bleak November day.

174

My heart is beating almost imperceptibly. It's as if it's ashamed of keeping me alive.

...

My heart beats only because it must. And when it beats, and beat it always does, it beats calmly, slowly, for it does not want to be heard and blamed for my existence.

175

That dullness that always creeps back after Julija leaves is painful.

Days before the last Julija's visit, my head was filled with the unpleasant feeling of *what else is there to do*; is there anything I can become excited about besides Julija's visits? Yes, there are things I am still able to ... not enjoy, but merely tolerate. I feel like a hardened fortification; I just am,

protecting whatever is inside of me. Are those insides worthy of sustaining, though? I will never be able to transform myself into a blossoming flower. When the ice thickens around me, I become distant and ruthless; I rarely find myself in the right mood to tolerate sentimental thoughts about elegance-invoking things. They irritate me; I dismiss them as nonsense. I harden and come off as inaccessible.

This typical late afternoon blackness of November is uncanny; it's pressing against my head.

176

When I look at people marching in the street, the sense of violence this cold world is able to project becomes unbearable, especially when compared to the warmth I experienced during Julija's recent stay. But if I remember a pleasant feeling related to her, I become filled with sadness, knowing I can't simply re-wind back time to those moments. And when I remember all those intimate things I wrote down before your eyes, I feel silly and exposed. Had people seen them, they would have derided me.

I do not want to expose myself to the world while I'm still alive. As strange as it may sound, I do not want foreign eyes floating

in my mindscape. As of today, you are the only stranger present in it. Lake Redoubt, however, as you know, is still off-limits.

Ah, Lake Redoubt – and its castellan, the Buried One. I feel that she is my most powerful force. She is the one who prefers warm fragility to violence, and who likes to talk about her hands when she wants to be loved. And she is also the one whom Julija accused of being a deceiver: a calculating, machine-like vixen. She, however, needs Julija's sun to thaw my exterior and let her true feelings pour outside. When Julija is absent, she hardens: she becomes ice-cold and unfeeling.

Does she, though? No – it is the Keeper who is suffocating her, not permitting the feelings to emerge through her.

177

There is a very old blockade in me which dates back to the kindergarten days, and which I imagine as an unbreakable steel lid tightly fixed onto a surface. It allows me to define my own worth and survive the greyness of an average day. If something or someone had it removed, I would wither from within. This steel rectangular plate is something secret and something that is protecting my core. The moment of transparency occurred in

January two thousand sixteen. It was then when I finally realized there is a very old, hidden blockade in me, and that I was unaware of it during my teen age and the age predating it. When I saw what is behind the lid ... I was overwhelmed by sadness; that's the most striking thing I remember in regard to it. So it probably should stay shut and be treated like a treasury. Perhaps it's best not to define whatever is inside. After that event, I had tried multiple times to dismantle it right before I fell asleep, knowing that it's something that's preventing me from seeing myself the way the external world sees me. It seems that it indeed does exist to prevent the world from imposing itself onto me.

178

There is no place for the sentiment and æsthetics emanating from *Lake Redoubt* and *Julija's story* in Slovenian society. Its dishonest socialist, or Catholic, humility had already hurt me at a tender age. "You want world peace!" said the teacher when she heard my New Year's wish.

179

There's a recurring dream I have: I'm chased by a ghost-like woman, but she

does not have my ghostly form from July, nor is she Julija, or even her corrupted version. Her hair covers only the upper part of her face. She is always silent. She stalks me. Today, I somehow managed to hurt her legs, so she would not be able to pursue me. I was dining in a big, grey room with other people; they were not my relatives or my friends. She appears on the opposite side of the room, and I say in a mocking tone, "There she goes again!" but no one seems to care. I get up and move to the left corner, then up, but she cuts me off. This time, she does not track my footsteps. I scream and wake up.

She actually appeared on crutches, so I loudly ridiculed her because she was so comical. A ghost on crutches.

She is alien and nothing like me. She even has black hair. She would not fit in the Flatlands. Her presence would be too distracting.

It's probably something from the school days. She always appears in public spaces, in the street, etc. Her facial features are soft and round.

The execution symmetry
Usmrtitvena simetrija

180

I had a very beautiful and unique dream today. I forgot a lot related to it the moment I woke up, though.

Me and my *lover* – who wasn't Julija, but someone I have never seen before – were subjected to a sham trial in the court of a woman tyrant. As we were aware that we are facing certain death, we made a pact that, when the process ends, we will die together while declaring our love to each other. And so we did. For some reason, our bodies were tied together, and we were facing the same direction; our hands were tied and lifted in the crucifix position. I think we participated in a mass execution event, but I did not bother to look around. I kept saying, "We are together," and my lover kept replying, "We are together," and, "I love you" – "I love you." The killing place was a closed chamber; the floor was made of brown wood, and there were also red carpets, red tapestry. We were dressed in red-white regal clothes. When the mechanism of death went in motion, unannounced, the footstool fell on

its side; dangling, I felt pressure on my neck. I said, "I love you," but my lover did not reply. It appeared to me as if she were slightly overwhelmed. In the end, to my relief, she turned her head to the right, looked me in the eyes, and proclaimed, "I love you." She quickly lost consciousness, while I was still there, dying unusually long; I even checked my feet to see if I'm touching the ground. When I was about to faint, I woke up. Our execution was peaceful and dignified enough, even though hanging is usually regarded as vulgar.

And I want to say that the Lover and I were not executed in the Flatlands; it happened in a foreign court. The situation in the Flatlands remains stable and familiar. The Lover exhibited the following outward characteristics: she had pale, white skin, dirty blond hair, and she was thin. She looked nothing like the ghost on crutches. Our death was strangely peaceful and beautiful, even though I could feel the rope's strong pull.

I know that this was merely a dream and not a near-death vision, the redness of the room and our beautiful clothes, and the unusual serenity of our execution, however, elevated it to a very high position in my mindscape.

The bloodlust fragments
Fragmenti krvoločnosti

181

I'm standing near a closet, reading a book. Suddenly, something sickening – a dark memory – jumps from the corner of my mind. But I stay calm. I feel detached from it, even though it's tied to me.

In the older dreams, the fragments of atrociousness were too exposed; now, they are so meticulously hidden, that even I forget they exist.

People come near them, yet they never realize what they are staring at. "Why am I acting so calm if I'm a beast?" Every time I try to get rid of them, yet every time I wake up before I'm able to throw them out.

Ten years ago, those sickening parts were hidden clumsily; now, they blend in with furniture and dissolve in paintings. I even feel proud of myself when I stand near that closet, calmly reading a book.

Those hidden pieces are by far the most sickening parts of my mind. To think that I am able to host people in the room where those fragments are so expertly hidden with a straight face ... I would laugh with

them, and they would not realize they are in a room with a beast.

182

Stojim ob omari s knjigami in premišljujem. — H'm ... a Flatlands scene in which the foreign entity suddenly becomes violent, knocks me on the ground, holds me down, and tries to force me into revealing how to summon the ferry and get ahold of the key to the Redoubt ...

... Gravity, paralysis working against me on the hostile entity's command. I get dangerously overpowered, I can't utter a word, my heart starts pounding, my breathing becomes heavy, I almost faint. I'm in shock. I can't concentrate. I can't fight back.

183

I'm lying in the grass like a doll while the passers-by bemoan my fate. Some even fall to their knees and touch my forehead and cheeks.

Groups and individuals appear from nothingness and disappear into nothingness. I am barely moving my lips. — It's obvious I'm trying to beg for help, but nobody knows what to do. My tearful eyes keep on moving, albeit slowly, in every direction.

It's not the shadowy gentleman. —

People suddenly vanish, and I scream, “Nooo!! Don’t hurt me!” There is someone, or something, grabbing my neck and holding a veil over my frightened, exhausted eyes. I can finally lift my legs, so I try to kick the hostile apparition yet disperse nothing but air molecules.

The ethereal violator finally speaks: “Do you not remember what your Redoubt is made of?” The male voice proceeds to recite one of its fragments, but his utterances are cut off as if swallowed by water.

I reply, “First, it was Julija who wrote that, and second, we are not even in a forest, you blind fool!”

He: “I’ll drag you into one. Come here, you little vixen!”

He is now dragging me towards the coniferous forest in the seemingly impossible distance by my hair while I’m in shock, screaming in pain. My body goes numb long before we reach our destination. When we finally cross the tree line, he grabs my head and presses it against the soil.

Me: “It can’t be.” He rises, reciting the passage again, and again the atmosphere

refuses to accept his words and throws them into the water. Seeing him slowly put his gloves on, I sob uncontrollably: “Don’t tell me your plan is to strangle me.”

It is the masculine force of Lake Redoubt itself!

THE END

Bartolomej Maussar

The summer dream
Poletne sanje

Today, I had a dream about Julija.

Small and large city-states; multiple units, each consisting of a small and dominant one. The archaic written narration said, slightly paraphrased, “The tributes grew smaller and smaller, and eventually ceased, as the ruler of a certain dominant city had failed to respond to disobedience.” The woman rulers dressed in byzantine-like clothing with big ear-rings were standing together, holding each other, as if posing for a picture. Julija, youthful and energetic, was looking at the tall woman on her right; she was showing her teeth, smiling. It was clear to me she liked her. The Buried One was on Julija’s left – smaller, and almost invisible; I couldn't see her properly. Julija was smiling at the big city ruler who had a confident expression and was looking straight ahead. It’s as though my mind tried to cut the Buried One out of the picture completely. Her face was not visible. She was almost like a ghost in that living

picture – small, barely visible. Faceless. But she was a ruler as well.

It wasn't just the three of them, though; there were more of them, but I only focused on Julija, her expression, the tall one, and the Buried One. They were all holding each other, but the Buried One was a little jealous because Julija was so visibly charmed by that tall woman. Yet I also felt that it was nothing to be upset about.

Hands touching backs. They were supposed to be like that. The scene was both warm and ceremonial. When I was looking at that living picture, Julija's and the tall ruler's face and body were clearly visible, yet the Buried One's whole head was oddly obscured by white light. I was unsettled because she was smiling and admiring her so obviously, but I let it pass. It felt like a celebration of an important event that had recently passed. I felt that they were all equal. They were standing there as equals.

No trace of weaponry or militaries was present in that dream. It was just them, the woman rulers and city-states. No guards.

Julija was looking at the tall ruler from under her brows, smiling affectionately.

It's odd because Julija demonstrated no aggression towards me and was surprisingly amicable and calm, though retaining her characteristic bluntness. I was under impression she preferred the western feudal hierarchies and relations, yet she looked so natural wearing those summer clothes and heavy jewelry. During that ceremony, in the building that felt like a temple and not a fortress, Julija demanded nothing from me. She did not single me out and call me a deceiver. Not only she tolerated my existence; she was content. More than content.

The fact that I was graced by a dream that showed me Julija in genuinely joyful spirits and being so kind to me should be a cause for celebration.

The Buried One wasn't disgusted by her peers in that dream; she felt comfortable in their presence. Their touch did not bring her discomfort.

The resignation, part one

185

The cloud. — Now that you, dear reader, know about my Julija, it feels like I finished a chapter in my life; yesterday, when I went to bed, however, I sensed a huge, black cloud hovering over me. It was as though it had replaced the bedroom's ceiling and even the roof. It was an omen of annihilation. The Flatlands now feels like a place that survived many battles, and I feel like a bird that wants to fly away.

...

After having realized that my place of abode had been wrapped in a cloud, seeing it clearly from a nearby hill, I imagined it descended because it wants me to step on it, so that it would carry me away.

186

The black flower. — I am a black geometrical forest flower, the structure of which looks uncannily complicated and consists of hundreds of short straight lines. I did not evolve into a more normal-looking flower; instead, that geometrical

plant merely became, bigger, blacker, and grotesquely convoluted.

I now wish to quietly live as the black flower in the green forest – after having decoupled from the Flatlands and Lake Redoubt by putting them in a container. Does this make sense to you? They will be automatically called back when I need their protection – their walls and their army. May they, in their contained form, efficiently serve me as a magnet and dissolver for bad thoughts! One day, I will not be able to maintain my integrity anymore, and I will snap. I will fall on the ground and become obscured by the tall grass. It will be as though I was never there. ... I looked poisonous, but I wasn't.

187

The final stage. — It is obvious to me that I have entered the final phase of my life. My whole life was nothing but an act of containment, a wander through the tilted forest through which, I the black geometrical flower, was moving slowly and cautiously in the hope of finding its edge. The night became my ally, as it allowed me to blend in more easily. Nevertheless, the forest creatures noticed me; some of them tried to get rid of me,

others confused my movement for death convulsions and ignored me; some thought I was poisonous, and others regarded me as cursed and were afraid of me.

The forest itself is sensing that the black flower is an anomaly.

...

I am moving slowly through the grass, with tiny, unnatural movements, trying to anticipate every single detail. “What is that black flower doing?” a nearby voice asks. “Wait. Flowers can’t walk. What is that thing?!”

It’s nothing! Please excuse me while my inner form is being pushed out where it will calcify.

188

The steel lid. — I sense that steel lid again which is protecting my core. It reminded me that if it disappears, my worth would diminish; it would vapourize, as the external world regards me as worthless — broken and useless. It wants to grab me and forcefully align me with its grid. But I would shatter; it would do nothing but break me, and I would be dying in horrible pain. My fragments would scatter into tiny fragments and be swept away by the world’s cleaning machines.

The importance of the mysterious and seemingly autonomous steel lid cannot be overstated. The Red Fortress, my near-death vision, must be its ethereal manifestation, while Lake Redoubt is its articulation.

When 'I' saw the Red Fortress, I did not enter it. Does this fact not correspond to the steel lid not allowing me to open it?

189

Going to hell? — Hell for me would be something like a never-ending scene of me entering and leaving a room inside of which I would be attacked by a group of small, annoying demons supervised by their masters, and then waking up to Julija's apparition kneeling on the floor with her hair covering her face, saying she loves me.

At any rate, tomorrow is the day of the summoning. It must be. It must materialize. She must be summoned. I cannot fail. I need her. I want to see what she will do. The last time I saw her was in that Byzantine dream; the last time I summoned her was in October last year; now it's February. I must see her again. Today, at around 17:45, I saw a bright red light shining through the shattered blue-

grey cloud blanket; it was so beautiful. It's her. She's coming!

Yes, I saw it; I saw beauty! But I could not feel it ...

190

In the Flatlands again.

Something is not right.

Mister Shadow, you seem very confused. Are you alright? We are standing on the lake shore; we both can see the Redoubt and its towers. Julija is on her way; I will be reunited with her once again. You cannot stop me. You cannot do anything to prevent her arrival.

It is now obvious that the shadowy gentleman is malfunctioning. He is spouting nonsense.

I, the Buried One, am the ruler of the Flatlands and the Redoubt, not you. You are a foreign entity, and you do not belong here. Julija will definitely come to me in less than five minutes, just like she always does when I summon her.

The shadowy gentleman is now spitting out profoundly malicious insults.

Ha-ha-ha!!! Señor Shadow, you are in Julija's and my private space. You are an

invader. You come to my realm and then act as if you own the place. You have no shame. You cannot touch me; the Red Fortress is floating before my eyes. How dare you mock my ethereal vision! The Red Fortress is hanging above the Flatlands and Lake Redoubt. It is untouchable. Now remember-

He cuts me off; gibberish is oozing out of his mouth.

“False! Don't mock me, you little ...” I pick up a stone and throw it at his figure.

...

I point at the shadowy gentleman with my right forefinger: “I could have sworn that you used to be less solid, if solid at all.”

What is going on?

191

“Oh god, stop insulting Julija! I don't want any more ruckus in the Flatlands. You must not under any circumstance talk to her as you talk to me! Show respect to her; bow.” I nod and a spear carrier rushes to me, trying to switch positions, but he is too short; he can't reach his mouth. I pick him up and he latches on to him like a tick.

“She’s here, she’s here, she’s here! Julija, Julija, Julija, forgive me!” I run somewhere, then slowly emerge from the distance with my head down, holding Julija’s right hand with my both hands. The golems shout, “She is the undying flower!”

192

Having been deprived of the tick by the ceremony, the shadowy gentleman hurls insults at us.

I run behind his back and shut his mouth with my hands: “Ha-haa! The dark gentleman seems to be broken at the moment; however, yes, indeed, indeed, he is still here, unfortunately. He is like a parasite – buried deep under, deep, deep under. I am so sorry, Julija. Julija, I am sorry!”

Julija makes a cute face, and says in a lovely voice, “He is the parasite.” Her eyes are shut; her mouth is expressing joy with restraint.

The shadowy gentleman: “You are uh bleurgh ...”

No, heh, you can’t even hear properly. She is calling you a parasite, not me. You are indeed so broken, so very broken. Shhhh, shhhh ... She must not hear your ramblings. You are spiralling. Let me fix you. Stay still.

Mr. Flaps! Help me!”

Flaps and his golems quickly surround us:
“Señorito Shadovas, comma sielantli.”

Me: “You do know what happened to the void angel, don’t you? He was hacked into pieces. Heh, you are broken, you parasite, you filthy, filthy swine!”

193

Later that evening. — We are still. I am resting on my heels, holding her black and white skirt, while she is standing on the grass seemingly unmoved, her face expressing nothing but cold indifference, yet her eyes are fixed on me.

194

In the void again. — Julija is gone. I am so sad. I am so disgusting. She didn’t say anything. Why do I still live? I don’t understand. Life must be squeezed out of me. I am so disgusting. Everything is dissolving around me. *Sobs.*

Julija is gone; all those feelings of warmth are being extinguished. I am a mentally ill thirty-five-year-old woman. I will never be young again; I am so gross.

I am being hit by flashbacks. I want to return to yesterday when Julija was with me, but I can’t. I am so disgusting; even my eyelashes feel disgusting right now. Every

single part of me is disgusting. I do not deserve to live.

Should just toss a coin?

195

If I strangle myself, the suffering will cease. There will be no more pain when I wake up.

The torment will never end. *Sobs.* I am too old to fight my brain. I can't live anymore. The storm is attacking me constantly – even when I wake up. I survived for so long, but I can't do it anymore. I am so tired. Everytime I wake up, I groan because the memory comes back to haunt me. I am so sad. To live for the sake of living is just so sad ... Every time I wake up, sadness floods my head and makes me curse myself. This feeling will never go away, so I must go away ...

196

I am constantly waking up; my sleep is fragmented. And everytime I wake up, I'm tortured by my own mind. The fast-moving images assault me. I can't fight these stabs and feelings anymore. I fought hard for years; I can't do it anymore. I am too tired. My brain is in constant survival mode. I even think for other people, so to say. I can't do it anymore. I want to shut down. I want to rest. But if I rest, if I sleep,

I wake up and get assaulted by either memories, altered memories, or simply imagined violence. And if they are mixed with a beautiful memory, the pain becomes unbearable. I constantly hear screams in my head. For as long as I remember, my brain was operating under constant stress. I feel sick. It has always been like this; I was already mentally ill as a child. Broken beyond salvation. Tortured. I have survived for so, so long. But I can't go on anymore. One day, the suffering will have to stop. *Sobs.* I can't suffer any more. I can't.

I have always been so vulnerable and unsafe. I mean, I felt I was never truly safe. I could stay alive, but staying alive means more unbearable suffering. It seems the point when the pain becomes too exhausting has arrived. I can't tolerate it anymore. I am too old; I want my brain to respect me. I'm not little anymore. I constantly feel that I am not safe, that something will come to me and take me away. It's a very old and premonition-like feeling. The suicidal thoughts are constant as well. I just can't find a reason why I'm still fighting. I'll be honest: every day, every night I'm thinking about strangling myself. "It's a logical conclusion," I say to myself. "That day will arrive." I am

exhausted, and I can't tolerate those unchanging thoughts anymore.

197

I don't deserve to drink cold, fresh water, but I do it anyway. It's the story of my life: I know that I am disgusting and unworthy of life, and yet I keep on living despite this never-ending suffering. Three decades of my brain hurting me, stabbing me every day, every night. I am so sorry; I should have never unleashed these thoughts at you. You are being burdened by my mentally ill ramblings. Forgive me, whoever you may be.

198

Every little detail could trigger those stabbing thoughts. Under attack by violent thoughts again: the mannequins move unnaturally, and they are being broken while still wearing a calm expression. I feel that someone or something will force its way into my house and kidnap me. It's just a thought, I know. It's probably because I deserve to be taken away and tortured. I am such a waste of air and atoms. I deserve to be broken like those mannequins, and I must bear the pain with a calm expression. I must not burden other people. The doors are locked; nobody seems to be outside. But the image of those mannequins, a female mannequin ... – her face is slowly being deformed by a big,

strong hand. *Sobs.* I can't stand this anymore. I know you think I am overreacting, but the suffering is real and unbearable ... For me ... it's unbearable. I'm sorry. I have had this feeling that someone will kidnap me and bury me alive since forever. It's like a prophecy; a feeling that my life will eventually end gruesomely. That I will be trapped somewhere forever.

199

The next phase. — Julija is the only one I need. I need no help from strangers or medication; they would make me even more miserable. I need Julija to see beauty, I need her eyes, which is why I keep summoning her. She and the summoning rituals are the only real reasons to live.

This whole ordeal was yet another Julija cycle. I've been through this before: I summon her, her sun melts my icy exterior, I become sentimental and cry, she leaves, I feel a void in my chest, sadness overwhelms me, then weeks pass, the ice reforms, and I long for her again ...

I feel irritated, still mourning the fact I was not able to properly savour Julija's visit. It's always the same: I always want to freeze myself in time when she's here. But I'm already frozen: it's always the same:

the ice melts, I get sentimental, bemoan my fate, you know the rest.

I feel grief and anger because I am never fully able to savour those special moments. She leaves too soon, and I am too overwhelmed when I meet her. And yes, everything has to be intense for it must melt the thick ice around my heart. I doubt I will ever die during or right after Julija's visit. I'll probably die when I'm icy and resigned.

All these events I am describing won't stop repeating. One day, though, I will crack. A tiny event will push me over the edge.

200

Julija was so calm the last time because it became obvious I can't take the suffering anymore, and that I will catastrophically crack sooner or later. She pitied me.

Julija's cold expression and calm demeanour was the culmination; I have truly entered the final era of my life.

201

The final era means that the final catastrophic event can come at any time, and that my powers to resist are fading. As you can see, these words make no sense, because I am unreachable and unmovable.

I am a sinking statue waiting to crack under sufficient pressure. It's inevitable.

202

A nightmarish end. — When I was about to fall asleep the last time, the tortured barking sound prevented the process yet again, and I was instantly flooded with thick despair and panic. My surface is cracking; it cracked today, actually. And also today, I had a nightmare in which I saw a woman (me) being forced to babysit a daughter of her relatives. And for some reason we were situated on a desolate country road surrounded by a still, quiet forest. We were both wearing eerie black and white dresses, but unlike her I did not look preposterous in it. Be that as it may, that girl would not stop climbing up a strange slide that was standing near the asphalt road. I kept telling her, "Stop doing that already; you will fall," and at one point she replied, "I cannot die. I am protected by a guardian." I forgot the exact term, but it was obvious her 'guardian' was something ethereal, so I thought to myself, "There are obviously some loose screws in her head." I retorted, "You will not die; you will be damaged." And at that moment she lost control and hit her head against the road. I heard a crack. "Oh god," I said to myself while watching her touching the wound which produced gory sounds. I was

standing there paralyzed, eventually, however, I slowly approached her to examine the wound, saying, “Don’t touch that. Don’t touch that. Don’t move.” The most horrific part was the fact I was not feeling distressed; I was calm and annoyed. I asked myself, after having seen her hands spasming, and after realizing my prophecy had materialized, “Should I call an ambulance or ask the woman with her kid approaching us to drive us to my car, so that I could transport her to the hospital myself?” And I just could not decide. I was more preoccupied with me feigning distress, so as not to appear weird or worse, than her well-being. Then I woke up. I did not even try to prevent her from using that slide.

203

As I said, today, on Sunday, a major crack in my icy frame appeared. I opened a window and screamed uncontrollably for a minute or two, and I also shattered a picture frame hanging on the wall of the corridor. But the moment I threw it against the ground, I normalized and started to carefully deal with the shards. I still stepped on and fractured the picture itself, however.

My half-conscious screaming was provoked by the incessant distant barking. When I hear a bark, it’s like I’m exposed to

the sound of a weapon discharging; it makes me physically unwell. Never before I was able to scream like that. My despair is now even bigger. I am even more depressed and resigned to my fate.

I flinch immediately; lately, I've been hallucinating the barking sounds. They shake my whole body. I feel anger and despair. Those dogs sound as though there are demons trapped in them as a punishment, so they howl in never-ending pain.

Everything feels apocalyptic after today's screams.

Indeed, I stooped so low that I opened a window and screamed at the barking sound that did not yield. And I was almost unconscious; as if I were possessed. Something pulled me up, made me writhe in agony, and after having forced me to open the nearest window, I shrieked like a banshee. I could not resist the possession.

204

I am still recovering from yesterday's shrieking. My surface has cracked. Now I'm constantly mumbling something to myself. I am clearly going insane.

I'm whispering when I remember how my surface cracked yesterday. And my head becomes heavy, and I close my eyes.

205

On Wednesday, when I was crouching before her, grasping at her skirt and begging for forgiveness, Julija was calmly pitying me because she somehow knew what was about to happen to me. She foresaw the crack; she had already foreseen everything in two thousand fourteen.

206

I resign. — No one will take me seriously in the Flatlands anymore – not Mr. Flaps, and not the golems. I have lost the ability to command them. Now everything is in Julija's hands; she is the only remaining ruler. I had a vision: everything is gearing towards my execution in the Lake Redoubt, which will come after my official confession that Julija was right in the year of two thousand and fourteen, and in the year of two thousand and fifteen, and in the year of two thousand and sixteen, and ...

207

Record the ceremony! — I just saw Julija in her ghostly form calmly saying with her eyes closed and her arms crossed, "Remember those July songs." She was standing next to the window. On the right.

She uttered those words and disappeared.
The trial is coming, and I must record it.

I must admit that Julija was right, and I must record it. It is my obligation. I cannot leave before I make it clear she was right.

...

I am in the process of organizing the necessary text. I must make it presentable for the ceremony. I will be trailing Julija with my head down.

208

We will have to take the ferry, and so I will make the most out of its slowness and cling to her for the last time: "Don't go. Don't leave me alone. Don't go." She will probably stay silent and indifferent.

Suddenly I realize I am already there, and we are about to traverse the water. I burst into tears, "I broke the Keeper, Julija, I broke the Keeper!" The cracked, open-mouthed Keeper with visible distress in her eyes is being kept upright by two golems on the edge of the vessel. Still on my feet, I grab Julija's skirt with both hands and continue to implore her: "I don't want to be hanged. I don't want to be hanged. I don't want to be hanged." When it's time to

disembark, I fall on my knees, sobbing, and clutch Julija's right leg. She doesn't move.

Everything comes to a halt.

The resignation, part two

209

I have become completely deranged! I look like a child clinging to her mother, crying, "Don't leave me!" I used to be a ruler; now, I am but a husk of my former self.

210

Another wave of depression is hitting me. It's making me squirm, showing me how I scream and throw every object I can find against the walls.

That actual screaming happened on Sunday. It's almost Thursday now, and I just got hit by a strong wave of grief. The Keeper cracked, so I was whispering something to myself uncontrollably.

I am being abandoned. Nobody cares about my imploration. Julija does not react. I am completely invisible to everyone. Why ... Why Why ...

211

We were about to disembark, but everything came to a halt the moment I fell on my knees and clutched Julija's right leg, begging her not to leave me, not to let me

die. She's just standing there frozen, letting me squirm in pain. Nobody cared about my pain, nobody cares, and nobody will ever care. I will die and be turned to ash. Why ...

212

Everything I ever did was in vain. Julija was right. I have always been torturing myself for nothing. I should have died in two thousand fourteen – no, I should have already died in two thousand and seven. I was so prepared then. Everything was prepared.

213

Almost two decades of constant suicidal thoughts is too much. I am sick. Mentally ill. Abandoned.

What do you think has been stopping me for twenty years? Now that Julija is ignoring me, no one can help me.

214

I've been weeping and screaming in spirit for so many years now. I won't be getting an evaluation. I should be weeping in reality until I drop dead.

215

It seems that Julija, who is now the sole ruler, has frozen the Flatlands because she wants to punish me for my lack of coöperation and the fact that I have started

to treat her as if she were my mother. She thinks this is yet another proof that I am becoming more and more deformed.

216

A voice: "Aurora L-"

Silence!!!

You are nothing but annoyance. You are filling my head with more sadness. I am still clinging to her, even if she does not react.

...

I am not going anywhere. I will stay with her.

217

I cannot afford to lose her. We used to overlap effortlessly during the years of two thousand seven and two thousand nine. After that, she started to slowly break away from me; she became a completely separate person somewhere around the end of two thousand twelve and the beginning of two thousand thirteen. Her primary function has always been to protect me. And protect me she always did.

218

The whole world of the Flatlands is now frozen because I have relinquished my right to rule, so Julija refuses to put our

world in motion unless I let go of her, sign the confession, and accept my execution. I was thinking, though: if I keep myself together until the next summoning ritual, I might be able to forcefully re-start the world, as said ritual never fails to bring her to me, even against her will.

How it is supposed to end

219

The final scene. — Julija: “We will skip the part where she signs her confession.”

The execution spot has been placed between the two gates – the main gate and that of the manor house. No, that obviously hastily erected wooden construction of death does not resemble a scaffold at all: a simple slip-knot, two poles connected by a beam, and a ... footstool. Two golems swiftly lay me down on my back, and one of them puts the rope around my neck. They don’t even have to tie my hands.

Seconds later, everyone, everything is in place.

Julija comes closer, and she bends down, moving the footstool away from my feet with her own hands. She then steadies me, presses the left side of her head against my chest, hugs me tightly, and lifts her legs.

THE END

Bartolomej Maussar

*She is very, very angry – because I learned
how to both bask in her sun and cling to
life even when standing on the edge of the
precipice.*

The horror story of the five days in July
Julija's horror story

Day 1

220

Dawn. — She witnesses the sunrise but goes to bed right away.

In the afternoon. — *Breathes in the fresh, 'green' air.* “WHY DO I ALWAYS REMEMBER DIFFERENT SMELL??? NO, NO, NO, I LOVE the pink colour, but not the Sun itself. Go away, go away, go away!

Dusk. — God. Imagine stopping the motion ... No sunrise. Why can't the next night be eternal?”

She tries to end herself every night. At 0:00, she uses the rope, faints, yet wakes up every time. “Why not simply lie in the bed? It's way more comfortable.”

Moving up the stony staircase – slowly, slowly, like a ghost with her eyes half-closed; looking down, her hair is down.

Day 2

221

“It took me one hour and forty-five minutes to wash my hair. Every third day. It’s taking too long.

She tries to hang herself every day because a voice told her, “One day, you will die.”

“What does die even mean?

The morning light is here, yet I’m still alone. Did I even have a mother? Was I born? I don’t know.” *Looks at the edge of the forest.*

222

It’s 5 a.m.. “Disgusting Sun is coming again.”

She must move; she can’t let the sun touch her. “I would burn ... but not die. The forever flower ... I am ... the forever flower.”

She imagines the rain falling on the flower; she imagines herself licking the flower. “Wait ... what if I drown myself. Bath ... yes.” The *sangre azul* she sees beneath the water.

“I have no language. I am nothing. Today is not the time for hair.” Her pale skin is smiling in the mirror – so beautiful, so calm.

She holds her hair. “Why can’t I die?”

Looks out of the window. “The sky ... so beautiful.” *Gasp.* “The clouds are falling! Oh beauty ... so beautiful ... Today ... I will die. And I realize ... the cold sky suits me. Blue twilight sky ... like my veins.

Day 3

223

Her final words. But she does not die. Wakes up at 5 a.m. dangling. She is twitching; her hair is down. Convulsing – but not dying.

“Ah.” *Sigh.* *Unties the knot.*

She rises her fist to her heart – why won’t it stop beating?

“Oh sun, star: why are you so *bodalast?*”
(– daggery)

...

“IT’S SO BEAUTIFUL! THE ORANGE
COLOUR! THE OMNIPRESENT

ORANGE COLOUR! THIS IS
PARADISE!! Sun .. please ... don't come
today. Not today. Please, stop. Don't
move.

Give me an eternal night.

AAAAH! I CAN'T EVEN STARE AT
YOU! BECAUSE YOU'RE SO
BRIGHT!"

224

Her pale hand touches the white
wall. "What am I? I think I used to have
servants ... but now I have to serve
myself. Disgusting, disgusting ...

*Dropping the shutters. Rushing from one
window to another. Trembling. Her hands
are shaking.*

Her nails have turned to pale white as
well. "Why? Maybe my fingers have
always been like this. Maybe ... my mind
is dying."

A voice: "One day ... YOU WILL DIE."

It's embarrassing, yes, but she walks
around the house half-naked. Head down,
hair down, trembling. She is quite naked.

"Perhaps tonight ... the noose will not fail
me. At any rate," she recalls, "didn't I

wear a black dress?” – Yes, it would fit her pale skin.

No ... There is no black dress to be found. The closet holds ... her past clothes ... but she must not open it.

“I think the next night is the final night: my death. What is wrong with my life?”
Stares at the edge of the forest. “There is no final evening. Just endlessness. Or is it? Perhaps one day ...”

225

The house produces no sound.
The deafening silence.

“My finger-nails have become pale like my skin ... Why?”

It’s so beautiful outside: the blue-grey sky ... and the green meadow, forest ... “So beautiful.”

Her eyes are always half-closed. Her eye-lashes are so long, so long. A friend would say, “Cut your eye-lashes.”

Covering her pale blue eyes after she wakes up. “Stop. Stop. Stop staring at me. I can’t live like this any more. Too bright ... Why is this world so bright ... Today ... Wait – what do I do today? Oh ... I need to

die. But why doesn't it work ... Nothing works: drowning in the bath ... does not work. Slashing my throat with a kitchen knife? But that's disgusting ..."

A voice: "One day, you will die."

226

"When did my finger-nails become as pale as my skin? Wasn't the colour under my finger-nails ... red? It's white now. Why?"

Her hand is shaking. She's shaking, while holding her white, pale neck. Her house: as if frozen in time. Nobody ever comes. It's as though it does not exist.

Screaming: "No, I can't live like this any longer!

AaaaaaaaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!
!!"

The wind howls outside. But it's not sensible.

"I think this is crazy: at one point, it was 10 a.m.; now, it's 19:45. Why can't Sun, time, whatever stop spinning. Gross. Disgusting."

It's evening. She will have to slip into the noose again.

She looks at her hand. "You will die for nothing."

227

It's 20:16. "I missed the golden hour. Brava. I have no language. I have no nation. I am nothing." *Puts her hand on her skin ... – it's sweating. She cries. Tears are dropping down her face.* "I must die. Today, I will die. Imagine if I die falling down a cliff. Someone would check me. And I would have to pretend I am dead. Eyes open. But breathing?" Tears drop down her pale face. "Mmmmmmmmm, mmmmmmmmmmm..."

No words. Just tears flowing down:
"Hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh,
mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm..."
Hands trembling.

The tears are watering her skin. She uses them to wash her skin. Her trembling hands are used to wash her with the tears.

"Why are my fingers pale? I used to have rosy fingers."

It's 21:40. "Why is time flying so fast? No, no, no ... Why are you moving so fast

...” *Touches her face with both hands,
breathes.*

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH
– okay, stop. Stop. Stop. *Looks at her own
corpse in spirit. Shrieks. Cries, cries,
cries.*

She doesn’t scream out loud. Just in spirit.

She is on her knees, weeping in spirit:

“Mmmmmmmmmmmmm,
hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh,
mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm...”

– In her spirit voice.

“The noose is waiting. Perhaps today?”

Day 4

228

She is shaking. She is convulsing
– but still conscious.

“I failed.”

She has been convulsing for 1 hour.

“Please ... just let me die.”

*Imagines herself falling from a mountain,
red blood adorning her corpse. A villager
witnesses her ‘death’. Twitching. But it’s
fake.*

“One day, you will die? What if it’s today? It’s 00:15 now. It used to be 12:00 a.m. But time flows. It’s nowing, nowing ...

It’s 00:32. Darkness. Pitch black.

“Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm... Again the rope.”

When she starts to hang, during the first minute, she stops breathing. But then the breathing resumes. She gives out a sigh when she hangs herself. She becomes too tired for words. No more words ... Just her left twitching hand touching her neck and upper torso. Her body starts to twitch.

A voice: “Don’t worry. Tonight, she will die.”

“My mother hates me.” Imagines herself falling down, her blood pouring from the body. “My mother would ... hate me ...
“You are disgusting.” Tears pouring down her cheeks. “You are pathetic. Ew.”

“Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm...
hhhhhhhhhhhhh... ahhhhhhhhhhhhh...”
Moving in her bed. “I am nothing ... I have no mother ... just endlessness.

Mmmmmmmmmh... hhhhhhhhhhhh...”

Turning. Turning. Turning.

She is stroking her neck.

“Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmh...
kill me.”

She said,

“Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm
mmmmmmmmMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM...
” convulsing, shaking her shoulders – as if
out of habit.

*Weeping. “Why can’t I die?” Lying in bed,
eyes closed, hugging her pillow.*

Her shaking hands touch her mouth, her
face. “Please, let me die.”

She remembers the words: “One day, you
will die.” Starts laughing, “...hhhhhhh...
hahahahah HAHAHAHA!” with her eyes
closed, hugging the pillow. Moving,
moving, moving her legs. “I have no
mother ...” She doesn’t even open her
mouth; her mouth is closed.

230

“Ow, my head.” *Touching her
head.* “I can’t stand this ritual anymore.
It’s grotesque. This existence. It’s painful.
PAINFUL! I can’t go through this ritual

anymore ... Why can't I die? The hair washing ritual. Two hours ... So long and sad."

There is nothing in her house. Nothing but silence. She even makes sure to step quietly so as to not upset the silence.

"No more thoughts ... Too tired ... I just want to sleep, sleep, sleep forever. This ... existence ... or whatever you can call it, makes no sense; it's what even is IT? Who ... what ... where ... am I ... what is THIS? Ow, my head." *Touches her head, shaking.*

Head down, hair down. Hands shaking in front of her.

Hands shaking. "I can't do this, I can't do this ... Please ... let me die today. You said it yourself: 'One day, you will die.' Ah. Thank you, thank you! Thank you, thank you ... THANK YOU, THANK YOU THANK YOU!!

At one point, she stops. Looking at the white wall, she begins to weep. Tears are coming down her face.

Drops to bed. "I hate these rituals ... Stop my heart. Stop it. Stop it. It's so hard to

break free from this existence ... I can't move. *Starts kicking in her bed.*

She is saying these words in spirit; she does not move her mouth. It would be too vulgar.

231

She is shaking.

“...mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm...
let me go, let me go, I'm in pain. It hurts
so much ... I can't do this any more. I
CAN'T HANDLE THIS HAIR ANY
MORE! SO LONG. SO LONG. SO
LONG.”

It's over. Perhaps ... that day has come.

“Why did my finger-nails turn white.
They were rosy before.”

A voice: “There has got to be a medical
explanation ... no ... ?”

“I'm anemic? But I used to have rosy
finger-nails ... There was colour
underneath ... Now it's just white.
Strange. Strange.

Yes ... today ... must be the day. I will go
... I will leave this absurdity ...” *Begins to
shake.* “It's so unreal. What is this
existence ... I don't understand.”

A voice: "I want her to depart this time.
It's sad, but her 'life' is unbearable."

The twitching returns. The fingers are moving. She is convulsing. 'Back to life'.

"Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm,
hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh..." Kicking with her legs half-asleep. "Why."

Again she was on the cold, white staircase. She returns to bed.

232

At the upper end of the staircase, she prepared the footstool, like always, to stand on. When she talks, it's only in spirit; the house is horrifically quiet. There's no sound in the house. Yes, perhaps her moving legs ... – the sheet may produce some sound ... and that's it.

"Perhaps if I would—" The sound in her head starts skipping. "Why do I even ... ? I don't understand. I have no language, no nation ... I am nothing. I live for nothing. Alright, alright, time's up. I have to go now. I heard it: 'Today, you will die.' This is it! It's time to go now! Yes! This is it ... Yes! This is it!"

This is it. She looks at her once-rosy fingernails ... and sighs ... "This is it." Her

pale hands bring the noose over her head.
“Yes, finally.” *Caresses the rope.*

The noose tightens ... she takes a step
forward and floats.

Day 5

233

There is nothing but silence. The
silence is sickening. It's deafening. Her
pale fingers stopped touching the neck at
last. They are motionless now.

... The final convulsion – the soul is
leaving the body ...

234

Me: “I can't put my heart out and
hold it – I wish i could. I still can't get
over the ... sun motion ...”

Sobs. Holds a mirror.

“The morning won't go away for me
today.

The morning is here ... at this moment ...
and it will not go away.

... The golden hour is here.”

The Lake Redoubt

Krepost

This book is a work of fiction. It does not represent the views of the author. It is not addressed to a potential reader.

Kazalo

- Poglavlje I — Uvod
- Poglavlje II — Kaj je plemstvo in na kakšnih temeljih mu gre graditi trdnjavo
- Poglavlje III — Žuboreča druga polovica
- Poglavlje IV — Projektorja sovražne, zgoščene, lepljive črnine
- Poglavlje V — Vrhunec
- Poglavlje VI — Zaključek

Uvod

1

Prepozno je, prepozno, da bi si spet nadel masko: masko, ki skriva nasmešek in bodeči pogled zveri. Nikoli več se ne boš ločil od zavetja teme, da bi šel, odet v človeško kožo, stat med ljudi. Sedaj se te bojé in te mrzé. Ne spadaš v človeški svet; zapustiti moraš njihove predele, zvleči se v krošnje in debla krepkih dreves. Zbral boš srljive kače in pokvečene ujede: pognal gomad v neslutečo oblesno vas. Krik, in jeklo v mesu zaječi. Naprej, dalje, preletite, preplazite prag njihovih pritlehnih domov in jih pograbite. Posekal si kržljavce; v taci je stiskano okrvavljeno orožje.

In kaj je to? Čemu, toda čemu zdaj po čilih robotnikih raztresate to grajevredno seme?

2

Priveden je zadnji uporniški velikaš. Na levi in desni strani ga pod pazduho držita doslej nevideni kreaturi; vse naokoli so se pojavila do tega trenutka neugledana bitja, zakaj dolgo so bivala v temnih lesovih, proč od osvetljenih, od katerih najizraziteje izstopa gozdni vojvod, držeč svojo rogovilasto čelado, stoječ pred poslednjim protivečim se omahljivcem –

kakršen je celotni rod, h kateremu spada. V strahu pred zajetjem si je skušal vzeti življenje, o čemer med njegovimi rebri priča otožna ureznina, ki jo je njegova utrujenost zmogla poglobiti do rebra. Skrbno, od samega vladarja izbrani namestnik, popravivši si okrogla očala, taista očala, ki jih je ob mnogih prilikah poveličal v stražo, ki mu pred pogledi nevrednežev, tako se je prepričal, ščiti notranjo žarečino, si oddahne, saj napol padli izmučenec pred njim nosi črno pretvezo, ter brez kakršnekoli hibe v svojem glasu prebere obsodbo. Za njim stojita kraljevska dostojanstvenika, za tihimi, srepogledimi stotniki pa njegova v železo odeta, prav tako spokojna nepremična vojska; zlila se je s temnim ozadnjim gozdom, katerega obris je izrezalo temnorožnato nebo. In četudi je v obrazu izžlebljenega veljaka moč zapaziti drobcen odsev, so njegove oči že skorajda mrtve – brez žaru kot zemlja, in vsakdo bi verjel, da med mrtvimi ne leži niti ena sama oseba, v kateri je gorel razvneti plamen. In če bi vojvoda pogledal na njihove obraze le enkrat, bi jih za vedno označil za otroke zemlje in ne potomce zvezd. Ni časa za svečanosti. Ni časa za izumetničene oprave. »Kaj s teboj?« pred nebeškim kraljevim obličjem grome kapitan. »Da, nepojmljivo je tvoje preziranje naših poti,« v ozadju naprej

bučijo besede obtožbe. Ustnici se groteskno razvlečeta in razgalita bodalasta podočnika. Občutek nerazblinljive mračnosti. Obsojenec umolkne, se zniža, nepremično se zagleda v tla in tako čaka na smrt. Njegov služabnik na odru ponori: ujeta žival v kletki, zbadana od zle usode, divje skače in kriči.

3

Upor je zlomljen. Pobesneli poživinjenci odvržejo orodja ter se razbežé. Tiho se bodo vrnil nazaj na delo – zdaj, ko se je s prividom njihove premoči končala prevzemajoča jih omama. Ob razoblačitvi plemenitaš upočasni, ja, skoraj ustavi konja, ter k svojim obrvem, hoteč s pomočjo zastrtja sončnih žarkov ugledati izrisanje pričakovanega razočaranja, privzdigne pet vzravnanih, v srebrno kovino odetih desnih prstov, pri čemer se mu razširita zenici, kajti naš fevdnik je dolžen, motreč konja, gledajoč tlačana, kako se oba s sklonjeno glavo, brez besed in na odrejenem mestu nepremično stoječ, predse boljšeč, pustita prevažati iz enega v drugi kraj, in ne dopuščajoč, da bi se zadnjega zgolj zastran njegovega izgleda, mnogo bolj z njegovim ujemajočega, štel med njegov ponosni rod, katerega elementi takšnega ponižanja nikdar ne bi bili sposobni trpeti, robotnika ravno zaradi vnanje podobnosti, da bi ga

približal živali, prikrajšati za zavest, tj. ugnesti tako, da bi ju lahko štel v isti red, zakaj nekdanje zrcalo se je vpričo bolj spodaj opisanega razsodnika, vplivajočega na podobo, ki jo v sebi prikazuje, skozi njeno kristalizacijo ogledovalcu spremenilo v nekaj, kar ga zastran v njem izrisujočih se drž, kretenj in izrazov več ne zrcali in mu je tuje.

4

Njegovo trpljenje je strahotnejše od muk deset tisoč glave množice. Kdo je ta okrutnež, ki te je nabodel na sulico, te zavihtel proti nebu, se ti zazrl v oči, zaman iskal le sebi poznano svetlino, nakar je počasi spustil rokó, ugledal je bil namreč praznino, in zdrsnil si tiho, z doslej neznanim razočaranjem v črnino.

Ne gre ga obsojati zgolj zaradi uzrtja tega, da nad robotniki dviguje svoj meč: ne poznate njegove poti, niste uzrli njegovih očes.

5

Izrazi plemenitaševe izvrstnosti, sledovi, ki jih na njegovem obrazu pušča njegova duševnost;

plemenitaš:

je oni, ki potiska kroglo naprej, levo, desno, nazaj in ki jo tudi kleše. Ne glede na to, ali na poti pobira ali pa orodja iz svoje zibelke prinaša, ta, kakor so v vsakem primeru brez očes, se v temi brez obzira na svojo učinkovitost sama brez vodnika vselej v krogu vrtijo, piskajo in spuščajo paro, dokler jih videči popotnik ne pobere, dokler nerodno ne obležijo.

6

Tisto nekaj, kar samostojno določa tvojo in njegovo lastno vrednost oziroma pripadnost temu ali onemu razredu; posamezne sposobnosti ali *orodja* prvak črpa iz svojega ali tujega ogrodja. Hudo osiromašeni prvak? – Nič manj pripadnik prvega razreda. Besede in orodja: same in sama vam samostojno ne bodo podarila neke nove vrednosti, ki bi se, razkrižavši niti predhodne, vlila v vašo kri, se vtakala v vaše meso.

7

- Vzmet je, sila, sposobna spravljanja v gibanje.
- Kopico prefinjenih orodij vihteči robotnik < goli plemenitaš, žar prvaške volje

- Človek, ki trepljanje, vršeče se na njegovi glavi, smatra za žalitev in ki se odreče moči, če mostnina pomeni ugajanje množicam.
- Samotni otok, ki ga obkrožajoče vode, bodisi takšne bodi drugačne, pa naj bodo mirne ali razburkane, nikoli ne spremenijo velikokrat pa pogoltnijo in v zameno uničijo.

8

Popolnoma sam je zmogel ostati na poti, vredni pokončnega človeka, kakor ni bil zapeljan od lepljivih zemeljskih čarov, ki odvrčajo od razsvetljene poti in z lažnimi lučmi hrabrijo zatavanje v temo. O ti, vedno obstaja strah, da boš na poti do stolpnega vrha na koncu vsakega zavoja stopnic prisluhnil smehu poživaljencev ter se razgledal po njihovih sobanah, iz katerih svoje lovke razteguje zapeljivi vonj. Pomembno je, da pri vzpenjanju vedno gledaš le navzgor in se ne obotavljaš. In če te boginja podzemlja uroči in zvabi v vinsko klet, globoko pod stolp, potem skupaj z vinom svojo dušo izbljuvaj in tam tudi ostani.

9

Dve vrsti. — Od nekdanj sta obstajali dve vrsti ljudi: gospodarji in podaniki, prvaki in dolnjerazredneži.

Prvaški red je danes v primerjavi z drugim, maso, sestavljeno iz posameznikov, ki jih je moč najti povsod in v izobilju, maloštevilen in raztresen. Zaradi silne medsebojne podobnosti so ljudje drugega reda pogrešljivi oziroma nadomestljivi, saj lahko vsakemu tovrstnemu človeku nemudoma najdemo ustreznika oziroma posameznika, ki se po samem bistvu od prejšnjega nikakor ne razlikuje – vsaj ne tam, kjer zares šteje.

10

Za ceno ostalega. — Ni življenja brez uničevanja, ni sreče brez trpljenja, ni lepega v odsotnosti studa. Strah ... strah je tisto, kar jih žene k ohranjanju njihovih teles, in iskren, prosojen strah, ne vera – zakaj čemu v brezdušni pošasti saditi duhovne ideje – je en od bistvenih vzmetov tega stroja, ki ji pravimo država. Teptajte, govoriš dalje, teptajte jih, saj so, kakor zakonik življenja priča, zakaj veselje se tako odvija, takšnemu ravnanju vsekakor zapisani. Utekočinjanje tisoč tisočev, in kasneje še stvarjanje groz, je en od zakonov, ki ga narava terja že od svojega samega rojstva, saj živa bitja preko razkrajanja drugih živih bitij zagotavljajo njen lastni obstoj.

Graja neke starešine: »Odpustite mladim njihove ostre besede, ko vendar želé,

čeravno količkaj zaletavo, dokazati in izpostaviti svojo veljavo. Ne karajte jih, no, preostró, ko jih prevzamejo strasti, ne preklinjajte njihove duše, ko si z njimi zameglijo razum, da bi mu ušli – neulovljiv, nenajdljiv je tedaj. Raje se opomnimo: telo, četudi telo pokončnih rodov, je še vedno telo in zato pripada njima, življenju, zemlji.«

11

»Podobni sta, « si znotraj obzidja rekel svojemu plodu, ko si ga moral poslati v dolino, »ti obliki orehovit lupin. Toda poglej, v tej se skriva zlato,« prej si ju zavoljo prispodobe namreč odprl, »medtem ko v drugi vlada praznina. Ta se ravna po stkanih ji vzorcih in pravilih, prilivajoč olje na iluzijo njune enakosti. Podobna je torej mesecu: od nje se odbija človekova zavest: mesečevo svetlost vzrokuje samostojno sonce, in pripisovalo se mu je bilo enako naravo ter zmotno šteló med svetlobo izžarevajoča telesa. Poglej, njeni sledovi na tvojem obrazu, glej, ostrá svetloba iz tvojih očí.«

Z utrudljivo bolečino se zamisliš, ko robotnika vpričo nekega otroka nežne starosti, ki mu v očigled njegove podobne zunanosti še vedno pripisuje istovrstnost, prikrajšaš za omenjeno žarečino.

Protisunki, ki jih občutiš kot priča tlačenju brezzvestnih: prizadevanje škode živečemu živalskemu mesu, redkokdaj stvar, ki sicer predstavljajo človeka ali žival, vendar ne oddajajo zadovoljivega, na človeške odzive spominjajočega odziva, vkolikor ne rodi bolj ali manj gotovega prepričanja o svoji nezlomljivi težnji po delovanju v škodo svojega deformatorja, ki mu pripisuje zmožnost občutenja bolečine, v večji ali manjši meri v njem izzove neprilčno usmiljenje in milino: skrb za drugega ali skupnost, v kateri ima človek več možnosti za daljše življenje: ostalina iz nekega obroča v razvojni verigi življenja. Višje so živali razvite, bolj spominjajo na človekov izgled in temu ustrezno izzovejo več sočutja (medtem ko človeku kača predstavlja zelo umazano ogledalo, je steklo na gozdnem človečnjaku veliko čistejše, kar vam potemtakem dovoljuje, kakor se v njem deloma prepoznate, da mu pripisujete omejeno zavest), saj človeškim podobni odzivi na bičeve švrke proizvedejo iluzijo istovrstnosti.

In ti nisi nekdo, ki bi se naslajal ob golem stokanju svoje živine, kakor te k izvajanju nasilja žene potreba le takrat, ko mu dodeljuješ vlogi razvrščevalca in kaznovalca; kaznuješ torej takrat, ko se

zaide in postopa proti tvojim tvorbam, izhajajočim iz tvoje ljubezni do iskrenosti in dovršenosti. Rad razgaljuješ in razvrščaš oblike; iščeš neukročenost, ta pa išče in nudi razlog za tvojo krutost.

14

Ti si razvrščevalec, razsojevalec ali nekdo, ki postavlja reči na njihovo ustrezno mesto, in si potemtakem v službi Lepote in Iskrenosti. Udrihaš po rečeh, ki, mirujoč v zavetju nočne negotovosti, počivajo na majavi in krhki podlagi. Trgaš očala in maske, obraze za njimi pa vlečeš iz megle in izpostavljaš ostrim žarkom sonca.

15

Postal je svoboden v trenutku, ko je prejel ključ, ki je visel na nasprotni steni njegove celice, k zapustitvi katere ga je gnala tista njegova inherentna dispozicija, ki se je oglasila zaradi spoznanega razločka med celicami in dogajanja na vnanjem področju: morebiti ko je v njegov odsek vdrla in bodisi po sosedovi ali njegovi celici udarila neka oseba, ki se je klatila po omenjenem neznanem, s tem pa je spoznal, da tisto, za kar se ga je s strani te osebe, s katero se je poistovetil, priznavalo, lastnosti, ki so mu želele biti pridane, niso odgovarjale njegovi samopodobi, ki jo je hotel obdržati tako v svoji kot tuji zavesti,

in segel po nasilju. Zapor se tako, obvladavši, odgnavši ali zdržavši pritisk njemu podobnih klatežev, preobrazi tudi v njegovo domovanje, katerega neki določeni del postane njegovo gospodarstvo. Ob njegove celične rešetke pa so kmalu začele prihajati slonet majhne okrogle glave z vtisnjenimi zvedavimi obrazi milih potez, navdušujoč se nad tistim, kar je ležalo onstran njihovega bornega sveta. In ker je ta in oni plemenitaš s pripovedovanjem in opevanjem njihovih visokih umskih ali ročnih sposobnostih slovesu takih ljudi v svojih sovrstnikih pustil dober vtis, je nemajhno število gospodov odprlo vrata celic, da bi njihove sposobnosti mogle doživeti lepše izrabljanje, in še zlasti kralj, ki je zaukazal množične izpuste, spoznavši, da znanje, večšine in predvsem zvestoba marsikaterega tovrstnega posebneža, z radovoljnim srcem izkazujočega slepo pokorščino v zameno za dostop do višjih sfer, presega vse, kar mu more nuditi njegov resda istorodni, toda sedaj zlahka nadomestljivi vazal in morebitni oporekovelec. Zatrjevanja kot: »Poglejte, prejeli so plemenito izobrazbo in vedejo se kakor mi! Enaki so nam,« pa so starim spominom na vzroke njihovega prvotnega stanja dala tiho utoniti, in ujetniki so, v miru vkorakavši v tisto, kar si je bil gospodar, ko je še bil raziskoval neznano,

z nasiljem vzpostavil, skoval in izklesal, da bi bilo ščitilo tako njega samega kot tudi prisvojeni odsek celic, sčasoma pridobili halje, stkanе iz lastnosti in vrlin, pričakovanj in obveznosti, naslavljanj in nazivov, ki z njihovimi črepinjami nikakor niso in ne morejo biti zvezane, kajti zarod, ki ga je bil podjarmil prvi, zaradi svoje krvi, nezmožne rojstva odločnih, podjetnih elementov, ki bi ravnali kakor on in mu vsled svojih teženj in poskusov bodisi kot njegovi ekvivalenti nepremično zrli v oči bodi bili poslani pozlu, ne zmore naslikati nekega vzvišenega razreda, v katerem sicer odvezana čreda, oblečena v halje svojih pastirjev in živeča v njihovih hišah, ne vedoča, kakor je tuja njihovemu načinu življenja, čemu služijo v predalih nahajajoča se orodja, ki jih je gospodar nekoč prinašal na pašnik, govori, da so njihova znamenja in privzeta etiketa sama vir in pokazatelj gospodarske krvi.

16

Vsekakor se nisi sposoben vmisliti med ljudi, ki so jih bili podjarmili tvoji očetje, zato bi se odločil, vkolikor bi se moral ločiti od svojega stanu, za smrt. — Potomci gospodov, ki niso pripravljeni umreti za svoje dostojanstvo in podedovani gosposki položaj, niso pristni gospodarji in so potemtakem črepinjsko izrojeni. Ker so bili njihovi predniki odmaknjeni od

lastnega življenja, se ga niso branili zastaviti: gospostvo ali smrt, a glej – neskrhljive življenjske niti kot živino gnanega tlačanstva, motri – v osrčju bede neskončno plimovanje njihove zalege. Gospodarjev zaničljivi odnos do lastnega življenja mora biti z njim nepreklicno zraščen in temu ustrezno stremi k ohranjanju razmerja njegov duh > življenje > živina. Njegovo telo je njegova last in pripada njemu samemu, kakor ga je v odgovor na poizkus tuje prisvojitve pripravljen utekočiniti, tlačanovo telo pa je pred njegovim prihodom pripadalo naravi. Kaj je on? On je samega sebe zavedajoča se kreature, čigar očesi sta pritrjeni na gosposke možgane; skozi njih se izpolni tisto, k čemur teži sam Duh: k dominiranju nad naravo. Kaj so gosposki možgani? Možgani, ki svojemu imetniku zunanji svet prevajajo na način, da ne trpi njemu namenjenega poživaljenja, torej tisti možganski ustroj, zahvaljujoč kateremu preko njega prevajajoča se zavest zaradi njegove zadostno visoke razvitosti skupaj z dejstvom tega prežemanja rodi jaz, ki ne prenese, da bi se materializirala tista misel, v kateri svojo osebo gleda trpeti misel na takšno predstavo, kakršno jo zaradi nekega njenega dejanja, ki ga prej omenjeni jaz gleda kot na nekaj, česar kot takšen ni sposoben storiti, imajo o njej ljudje, ki jo smatrajo za nekaj, kar se od njihovih

razlikuje v samem bistvu, in ki ji jo sporočijo s kretnjami in besedami ali z njihovimi efekti ter ki jih ta sam jaz smatra za nekaj, kar se od njega v samem bistvu ne razlikuje – zaradi dejanja, ki je po tem odmiku od življenja, po tem vzponu do tega obroča v življenjski verigi in po sodbah bolj zgoraj omenjenega sodnika prejelo takšne lastnosti, kakršne so mu priznavane s strani ljudi, ki so dosegli omenjeni vzpon in prestali smrtno preizkušnjo. Roparski posiljevalec je nesnovnosti torej prisegel brezpogojno pokorščino, želeč ugajati in potešiti duhovnega opazovalca.

17

Od tod nepismene noblese pravica, da deli sodbo nad svojo podjarmljeno robotniško skupnostjo, pa naj ta sestaja še iz tako sposobnih glav, kajti hitro učeča se črepinja mora kljub svoji uporabnosti, ki jo črpa in uveljavlja gospodar, brez dejstva zvezanosti s to prirojeno dispozicijo ostajati nedeležna tej pritikajočih prav.

18

Vladanje in deljenje pravice s strani zemljiške gospode upravičuje dejstvo njene prevlade, torej to, da so ji njeni podjarmljenci v zameno za ohranitev svojega življenja predali lastno telo in z njim njegovo delo. In kljub svojemu

neizzvenljivemu stokanju, sicer prešibkemu, da bi preglasilo željo po razplajanju, ne zmorejo prerezati svojih življenjskih niti. Ker pa gospodarju takšna telesa predstavljajo vir dohodka, je z njimi primoran obzirno ravnati. Zatrjevati: »Vsako delo je častno,« ne more biti drugega kot odgovor na trepetanje ob misli na akt samouničenja ali smrti, ki sledi izjalovljenemu vstanku.

19

V primeru, da bi se v tujih mislih začel izrisovati poživljen, boš stremel za tem, da se v njih takšna podoba izbriše skozi niz dejanj, vrednih pokončnega človeka, ali pa boš takšne glave ugonobil bodi po zlu poslal samega sebe; odlašanje in dolga, blatna pot te razjedata, rane pa krpata s pomilovanja vrednim žolčem; vse ostalo je postranskega pomena. In naj bo ta ali ona sposobnost ali veččina še tako velika in redka, umazana mora stati v senci gnusa, ki ga je priklical živinski značaj.

20

Malozavedna množica milih in zoprnih obraznih izrazov je prišla ven: živina v obliki krave in vola, ovce in osla, krotkih in besnih debelih psov, in medtem ko so eni od zadnjih primerni za dresiranje, je treba druge zavoljo varnosti ostalih nemudoma pokončati.

A: Toda čemu jih kličeš poživaljenci? B: Ker je poživaljenost njihova bistvena lastnost. A: In kako si jo odkril? Mar so ti jo sporočili? B: Razkrilo jo je nasilje. A: In kako je do prišlo do njega? Oziroma raje povej, kako je prišlo do [kristalizacije] tega odmika od življenja? B: [Občutek vzvišenosti in iz njega nastali čut za čast in dostojanstvo:] Človeka od živali nezmotljivo in temeljito oddvaja tista sposobnost, s katero je prvi prodril v svet misli in iz njega potegoval umišljenine, vtiskujoč jih v materijo. Gospodovanje živini, igranje vloge arbitra o tem, koliko glav mora živeti ali umreti, organiziranje, skrb in izkazovana jim ubogljivost je možem določenih rodov poklanjala nenavadno prijeten občutek vzvišenosti nad naravo, ki so ga vsekakor želeli avgmentirati, razumevajoč, kakšnega slovesa bodo deležni, če si prisvojijo toliko in toliko živadi, bogastva in območij, videč se v tujih mislih veličastne, in ki so bili za razliko od drugih za to pripravljeni zastaviti lastno življenje, za kar so nekateri elementi za ta smoter prej ustvarjene zveze ob osebnem porazu znabiti moledovali, toda na kar se je po splošni zmagi in sledečih pripravah na tovrstna prisvajanja, in kar je bilo med pogovori priklicano v spomin kot očitek tistim, ki so na ta način obdržali življenje,

začelo gledati kot na nekaj grajevrednega, medtem ko se je ponosno vedenje vpricho očitni smrti, ki je postalo duhovni vzorec oziroma neki umišljeni objekt, ki je terjal podrejanje in spoštovanje, smatralo za višek bojevnikove slave. – Kri za pred tvojimi nesnovnimi očmi lebdečo nesnovno sliko!

22

Potem ko so oči daljnih prednikov končno prenehala zreti mater zemljo in namesto tega začela odsevati nebesa, je življenje, ki ga je po penetraciji sončnega žarka povrgla zemlja, končno doseglo svojo zrelo dobo. Človek je postal vzvišena kultura: bitje neba in zvezd.

23

Vzvišenost duhovnega sveta nad totranskim; motrenje v duhu in vsiljevanje v njem sestavljenih objektov v izkrivljeno ozadje. Pustiti kraju svoj pečat, vklesati mu formo, ki še dolgo časa po izginotju svojih avtorjev ukrivlja obdajajočo jo naravo; materializirati v nesnovnosti lebdeče oblike. Pojavitev visoko proti nebu težočih, okolico bremenečih, vse okoli sebe proti sebi privlačujočih, vse oči proti sebi usmerjajočih impozantnosti; v primerjavi s puščanjem plitvo ugreznjenih stopinj, ki jih more že naslednji dan sprati dež. Želja po ukrivljanju sveta, hotenje po

čim večjem vplivanju na obkrožajočo te naravo, da bi okolico povzdignil na tebe vredno stopnjo, in ne moreš preko želje ukrivljanja, kajti tako se ti zdi pojmljivo in pošteno. Naj človek s snovnimi očesoma motri zunanost, medtem ko z notranjima na njeno platno postavlja načrtovane oblike, podobno kot bo delala njegova roka, namreč vpisovala v njo na njih spominjajoče udejanitve.

24

Preko človeških rok se na zemeljsko platno prevaja duh; iz človekove vzvišenosti nad vsem obkrožajočim, k čemur, ko spusti očesi navzdol od oprsja do stopal, ali pa jih obrne proti dlanema, seveda spada tudi njegov nosilec, je pognal branik.

*Kaj je plemstvo in na kakšnih
temeljih mu gre graditi trdnjavo*

25

Zmagal bo človek, ki je zagledan v nesnovnost. *Takšna vdanost takšnemu nenaravnemu objektu, ki opazovalčevo telo tako v primeru njegovega verjetnega preživetja kot tudi neizogibne smrti obdrži na bojnem polju.* — Bodoč podvržen najvišjemu zakonu narave, robotnik za ohranitev svojega življenja zakrivi najnižkotnejši izraz neizrekljivosti, medtem ko je svet misli tako prevzel tvoje notranje oko, da kraljuje tvojemu telesu, in zaradi neke slike v tem nadnaravnem predelu bo človek kljub neizbežnemu porazu ostal na bojišču. Svet misli pronica skozi človeka in dominira živo naravo. Za človeka se ne spodobi, da bi bil hvaležen za dejstvo svojega rojstva, temveč, vkolikor se je sprijaznil s svojo mesnato kletko, za sposobnosti, ki mu ta zemeljski zapor pomagajo karseda ukriviti in preoblikovati, da bi se vsaj približeval nekemu videzu navidezne spodobnosti.

26

Duh preko človeških rok naravo zbada kakor trn. Tlačitelji, deformatorji in udarjači matere narave, s tveganjem

svojega življenja med takšnim udeleževanjem pokažete, da stojite nad njim, medtem ko podrejenost množice in njena pohlevnost izpričujeta njeno nepripravljenost do rezanja lastnih živlenskih niti, četudi premazanih z bedo in ponižanjem, ki pa se pravzaprav odsevata le od plemenitih oces. Ti, k njej spadajoči, umakni se, podli tlačan. Kaj praviš, da nisi tlačan? Tak si se vendar rodil, v okvir sklonjenega tlačana si se pravzaprav skotil. Njegovo kri si torej prejel, od svojih poživljenih prednikov v celoti jo vzel. Zakaj množice vendar ne morejo predstavljati nedrij, ki bi po vulgarnem semenu od časa do časa in zaradi neke naključbe – kot da bi ga po sprejetju pretvorila v primarno materijo – splavila neki blagorodni plod.

27

Nasilje tako ni drugega kot najzanesljivejše sredstvo za ločevanje plemstva od neplemstva: po njegovi preizkušnji bo razkrita človekova vrednost, in človek, ki svoje življenje, svoje golo življenje, ne imajoč pred očmi nekega višjega smotra, ki mu iz upanja, da mu bo vztrajanje pri življenju zavoljo bodi služenja bogu bodi udejanitve kakšne zamisli ali prevzema tuje sramote na lastno osebo, prislužilo neko posmrtno ali tostransko spoštovanje, obdrži v zameno

za neko nezamisljivo dejanje, si zasluži temu ustrezeni družbeni položaj; gre za misel, v kateri se njena priča vidi kot neki objekt, ki se mu po smrti njenega telesa ali njegovem mučenju s strani tistih ljudi, ki bodo imeli korist od njenega žrtvovanja, namenja omenjeno čislanje. Zdaj pa naj tebi izruvajo oči, naj te žgejo z razbeljenim železom, ostajal boš zvest svojemu naravnemu dostojanstvu, svoji težnji po materializiranju umišljenega prizora, v katerem ti tako vrstniki kot podrejeni izkazujejo pripadajoče ti spoštovanje.

28

Prav tako je potemtakem nesmiselno vpraševati, ali ima lahko nekdo, ki razume, si naslika ter vidi odvrtnosti tega sveta, nekdo, ki zanjo ve, med ljudmi namreč spoznavši gnusobo, neko čisto srce. Ali bi moral za posedovanje čistega srca živeti v popolni samoti, daleč stran od kakršnegakoli človeškega stika, in nazadnje, ali človek, končno spregledavši globočine človeške nesnage, sam ne postane umazan in izkrivljen. Lepoto ali gnus vendar razkrijejo nasilna dejanja, potem ko človekovo notranjost obrnejo navzven.

29

Mase, krdela, opita z razgledom na svoj obseg in množino, so vsekakor

sposobna izvajati nasilje, kadar se jih čezmerno ožame – in tudi štirinoga živina se prav tako upre in brca, ko se od nje terja preveliko delo, toda v primeru poraza in zajetja bi v zameno za ohranitev svojega življenja sprejela dosmrtno robotništvo. Človek, ki si je gospostvo priboril zato, ker se je zavedal svoje neprekosljive moči, toda ki se je po trčenju ob neko višjo sklonil in hlapčeval, človek, ki se po porazu zateče na obpotno njivo, kjer moleduje za svoje življenje tako, da z obrnjenim orožjem grebe po zemlji ... – ne gre torej za to, dragi pretepač, da trpinčiš šibkejše, temveč za to, da bi se pustil penetrirati neki večji moči.

30

Pravi zmagovalec si ti, čigar notranji očesi bosta tik pred tvojo smrtjo zrla prizor bodi nekega objekta, ki uspešno sprejme krvno žrtev tvojega telesa, bodi letega samega, ki mu je izkazovano ustrezno ti spoštovanje.

31

S svojimi obupanimi vzdihmi se sama narava podobno kot mesnato telo brezzavestno trudi izločiti bodeči trn oziroma tlačiteljska znamenja, ki so po človekovem prihodu sestavljane v nesnovnosti in s pomočjo njegovih rok verno odtiskovane v naravo.

32

Neki objekt iz sveta misli na svojega občudovalca vpliva do te mere, da potlači njegov samoohranitveni nagon: triumf onstranosti nad naravo. Objekti iz sveta misli, vplivajoč na svoje sprejemnike, preko njihovih rok naravi storijo tisto, česar ji nosilci možganov, nedovzetnih za nesnovni svet, niso sposobni. Krhka roka človekova je po njegovem vstopu v svet misli postala nevarnejša tako od najtršega rogovja kot od najjedkejšega strupa.

33

Dušech usta matere narave, posodo nekega nesnovnega objekta polniš s počasi izlivajočo se krvjo svojega telesa. Življenje svojega telesa razpenjaš nad brezdnom smrti, nad to črnino, kamor si se zdajzdaj pripravljen pognati.

34

Stokanje narave je sledilo človekovemu povratku iz sveta misli – tebi, ki te privlači zven in sila hudih strel, tebi, ki si preko donenja topov, preko uničevanja in smrti utiraš pot do lepote in iskrenosti.

35

Bolj duhoven boš želel izpasti, težji bodo morali biti tvoji koraki, ki jih boš

kakor hodeči polbog vtiskoval temu svetu, z njimi pa se bo večala oddaljenost od krotkosti in tihosti, ki ju radi zagovarjajo hudobni jeziki. Pustiti svoj pečat, odtis na tem svetu, pokazati, da je po njem stopal rod z oblakov: pol zverine, pol duhovini.

36

Izrojevalna veriga. — Duh in materija: nespremenljivost prvega, neskončno ponavljanje druge; tekmujeta za človeka; preko prisvojitve za nadnaravni svet dovzetnih kreatur prvi vanjo vnaša svoja znamenja, kot da bi preko človeka, ki je hkrati sel in opazovalec, želel povedati: »Glejte me, mojo vsemogočnost in povsodnost, lastim si vse.« Naj bo človek bič in meč, ki onstranstvu služi tako, da obvladuje in posiljuje naravo, naj v materijo vtiskuje duhovnost in naj prva nosi njene izraze. Kaj boli mater naravo? Da je njenega nedoletnega otroka ugrabil duh, potem ko ga je očaral do te mere, da je zaradi njega preskočil ograjo njenega dvorišča.

37

Ljudem nimaš veliko povedati, jim pa zato raje ponudiš vino. – Sedaj se lahko posvetiš važnim zadevam in ni ti treba z njimi ostati v podzemeljski kleti, kjer bi se moral opiti, da bi zbral moči in se poslovil od njihovih nasmejanih obrazov. Na tak

način se izogneš kalitvi dobro zasluženega počitka in nihče te ne bo navsezgodaj vlekel s pernic na morišče.

38

Potemtakem si pravilno vztrajal in primerno ravnal, ko si zavrzel čaše, ki so se jih dotaknili vulgarni jeziki, kakor se pitje vode iz napajalnika ne spodobi. Zdaj pa si boš naslikal kres, ob katerem se opeva božanstvo, ki oddaja močan, z izrazito ženstvenostjo obarvani glas: »Ponoči so pokvečenci močnejši od belih angelov.« Hodijo v krogu z rdečim strašilom v sredini. Le-to obljublja mehke pernice, pred oči utopljenega leska slika počrnele bele zidove. Veselijo se in pojejo, zanemarjajoč dnevno delo. Vse njeno početje sestoji iz obsedenega bolščanja v velikanski ogenj, ki ga hranijo vaški stoli, mize in vrata, ter mešanje zraka, ki ga komajda povzroča njeno počasno kolo. V daljavi se oglasi rog: da ob zemljo vrže pokorne in bojazljive, da obsije in izpostavi hrabre in kljubovalne. Njegov lastnik se je med približevanjem nenadoma spomnil nedavnega, z vinom obarvanega pogovora, ki je vseboval tale vzklík: »Bodi vzrok takšnega terorja, da začnejo žreti svoj lastni zarod.« – »Všeč mi je bila ideja, zdaj pa se smejem grozi, ki se mi odvija pred notranjima očesoma,« je samemu sebi nanj glasno odvrnil, ponavljajoč njegov

drobec, ki mu je sledil smeh in stokanje miz, po katerih so udrihale pesti, usklajujoč se z izbljuvki gobcev. Napadla ga je glasovna misel: »Bodi gnojilo zeleni jasi, in ti, posrkaj človeka, ko se po tebi opoteka. Angeli, podarite mu vaš glas – da ga bo sotrpin raztrgal iz zavisti.« Nepoučene priče, nedolžne oči, ki ga po graje vrednem tolmačenju gledajo hraniti zlo, mu prinesejo, kakor se v njihovih mislih izriše kot pošast, največ bolečine.

39

Množica postane prikupna šele, ko jo prežema strah, v tla usmerjeni pogledi pa bodo iz tebe izzvali dobrodelni čin.

40

V tej skupnosti, katere oblika in značaj temeljita na odnosu med podjarmljenci in gospodarji, ki ga je uvedla zveza s smrtjo spoprijateljenih mož, s smrtjo, ki je bila imenovana za edino stvarno preizkuševalko, zakonodajalko in podeljevalko pravic in privilegijev, ne gre zate, posameznik, temveč za lepoto, vzvišenost in moč, za spoštovanje nenapisanih pravil dostojnega vedenja oziroma za ostajanje v predelih žlebu plemenitosti.

Ko si prišel v stik z ljudmi malih okroglih glav, vse do danes po zemlji praskajočimi tako neutrudno, da žgočim žarkom pustijo do razbolelosti penetrirati svojo kožo, si začel spoznavati, zavevši se lastne večvrednosti, nad njimi zavladavši, resnično višino svojega porekla, kar te je skozi njegovo naglaševanje, vodeče v stvaritev družbenih redov in predprav, napravilo ošabnega.

Serafska skaženost. — Živela je kraljica večno zaspanih sivih oči; rada se je v goščavi svojega vrta zadrževala, vsakič hodila v spremstvu zakrivajočih rok, vsakič njen prihod najavile so ropotanje in činele; od davnega kljub svoji nedostopnosti veljala za mehkosrčno. Na vrtno čajno mizo sta se z zidu spustili vsiljivki: ubožici nista želeli drugega, kakor ugledati njeno blede obličje, in ker njenega zgroženega obraza ni zakrival plameneči nebeški ogenj, ju je dala obesiti. Mar so angeli, četudi še tako redko ugledani, nagnjeni k temu, da svoje podobe nudijo kot pašnike za nabreknjene oči? Lete so kakor debele črne muhe in ne gre jih spuščati po površini njenega bledega telesa. Primerjaj sonce, ki odklanja, da bi se na njem pasle oči, z za njih prijaznim in vablјivim mesecem.

Nemara te je vulgarna kri zares nekoliko izžlebila, vendar pa ne smeš tajiti svojega porekla, saj se tudi črvivemu jabolku priznava, da je padlo z drevesa.

43

Naglaševalo se je razlike v človeški vrsti, katere sliko sestavljajo nešteti brezlični elementi in v njih vmešani velikani, ki so za razliko od večno iščočih, nemirnih oči, značilnih za k zemlji sklonjene rodove, deležni zaprtih vek in spokojnega obličja, kot da s sklenjenimi rokami leže v grobu.

44

Mrak se je zgostil: levo in desno gledamo poganjati, sto za stotimi, čudne, strupene glive, katerih razkrojevalna snov izpusti kratek, toda rezek zvok, ki omrtviči občinstvo. Podoben je piku velike, studljive ose: preseneti, zaboli in povzroči močno nabuhlo, zoprno oteklino; celo priklene na posteljo, vendar takoj ko izgine, izgine tudi spomin na nesrečni pripetljaj. Vse je manjše, vse zasenčeno od starodavne rastline, na vejah katere se sveti toliko nepokvarljivih plodov. Človeška noga potepta kužno zajedavko. Nobena sekira ne podre omenjene rastline, le v njeno deblo vseka, da vsekrižem ležijo zaceljive plitve vrezine.

Zabavljivec ljudstva: »Ni sprave med svetostjo vsakega človeškega življenja in ljubeznijo do Zemlje ter njenih plodov. Ob prizoru maščevanja narave nad ljudmi, nevrednimi življenja, ki se skrivajo za absolutnimi človekovimi pravicami in v njej begajo ravnovesje, se občuti radost.« – Vulgarnež visokih govorniških sposobnosti, ki si ga je množica postavila za laskajočega malika.

Penetriranci bodi po meču ali besedi: pasivni, sedeči elementi oziroma statična, nespremenljiva podlaga, ki čaka, da ji mimoidoči (prehodni ljudje) vbrizgajo polnilo. – Dokler je njihovo število obvladljivo, dokler vlada trda roka pokončnega rodu, se bo robotnik ravnal po vzorcu, ki so mu ga stkali drugi. Čez čas, ko oblast le-teh ponikne, ko smrčki prenehajo zaznavati moč, ki jih je krotila, in ko se mesto na koži, kamor jim je bilo odtisnjeno njihovo znamenje, do nerazpoznavnosti zaraste, se brezstidni človečnjak, zgubivši vse priučene nazore, vrne v svoje naravno, v času zledenelo stanje, zapuščino njegovih bivših gospodarjev pa razgradijo ovijalke.

V mestnih strojih med kolesčki počivajo nedelujoče velikanske vzmeti: zdi se, kot da so izdelovalcu stroja padle iz rok: stara napaka tistega, ki ga je pognal v tek. Stroj se jih je slabo poslužil ali pa jih preprosto odpisal, popolnoma preoblikoval, iz njih napravil na tisoče majhnih vijakov in obročev, in na njeni površini, površini takšnih vzmeti, sta se mešala prah in težko olje, polzeče z neutrudno obračajočih se kolesc.

Pogrebni spreved ali gonja v tovarno zla.
— Procesija brez obrazov, ki jo kazi velikanska vzmet. Nič ne de, tok jo je že pogoltnil; slej ko prej dospe do tovarne, kjer bo na nešteti mestih prelomljena, iznakažena, predelana v majhna, ustreznejša gonilna sredstva.

Mravlje kričijo: »Ne zatiraj!« ko se odrivajo, ko druga drugo v zemljo porivajo.

Ljubimo dež, ker upamo, da pride dan, ko se končno ne izlije: da naraslo vodovje udari mravljišča, jih z enim sunkom zravna in zalije. Občudujemo noč, ker verujemo, da je enkrat žarek sonca ne

prebode in prežene, da zemlje več ne obsije, njenega blata nahrani in razkrije.

50

Ob vsakem pogledu na človekovo lupino bi te morala prevzeti nepopisljiva osuplost, nepredstavljivo strašnejša od občutka, ki te prežme ob motrenju zalege dveh spačkov, in ki bi čez čas prešla v žalost, saj ne bi mogel razumeti, zakaj bi duhu ustrezala takšna krhka, oko begajoča kletka, še posebej ko bi njeno meso primerjal s prelepimi, svetlobo oddajajočimi snovmi, ki bi Ga bile vrednejše in ki bi Njegovim zastopnikom vsekakor bolj odgovarjale. Edini bog je bil za svojo podobo brskal po blatu – čemu je bil stal za takšnim pomilovanja vrednim dejanjem?

51

Sicer pa se grdo sonce vsako jutro vrne, da s svojimi razžarjenimi bodali obsije – namesto da bi do smrti razbelilo – zemeljske priskutnosti. Izkazovati spoštovanje do svoje, četudi še tako studljive lupine, in v njej vztrajati vse dokler se njena ura ne isteče? Kreposten je oni, ki je nikoli ne opsuje in ki kljub težkim okoliščinam ohrani pokončno držo in stopi črni vosek, ki se je zgostil okoli njegove žarečine.

A.: »Opomnimo se, da moramo biti hvaležni za srečo, ki nam omogoča, da z drugimi ljudmi občudujemo in se nasmihamo zemeljski lepoti, na vse, kar je hladno, mrko in otožno, pa se ne ozirajmo. In kakor smo se danes tako se tudi jutri nadejajmo toplega smehljajočega se obraza, ki nam ga lahko naklonijo samo ljudje, ki jih prežemajo pozitivne misli.«

Tako izmikajoča kakor redka
Aurora: »Edini smisel našega truda je, da
vas učimo, pokažemo, da so ljudje, ki so v
sočloveku zmožni ugledati trpljenje in
smeh. Mi smo bitja čustev, navdihovana,
prežeta, vezana s toplim, nežnim
nerazkrojljivim okovom ljubezni.
Odenimo življenje v sladko igro lepote,
joka in smeha!«

Pogledala ga v je v očesi, brez
besed, vedela je, spoznala je njegove
občutke: razume ga. Prepustimo ostalim
računanje, prepustimo jim, zakaj v njih
poleg hladne preračunljivosti ničesar
drugega ni. One so nosilke pristnih
čustev, one so čustva. Vse drugo je zgolj
nesrečno posnemanje.

Aurora: »Vse hočemo spoznavati
na stopnji čustev: s pogledom, dotikom,
nasmehom, vonjem. Želim te poznati s
pogledom, dotikom, nasmehom, brez
vsakršnih besed, in pozaba našega
bogastva, naših čustev, vodi v otožni obraz.
In če čustvom nasprotno dovolimo, – če se
predamo našemu bistvu, našemu globoko

ležečemu bogastvu, bomo nebeškost
privedli k nam v ta svet.«

54

Gospodarica z rahlo iztegnjeno desno roko; nežni beli prsti počivajo na mizi. Miruje. Njena leva roka, katere spodnji del je polovično razkril široki rokav debele temnordeče vzorčaste halje, z lahno pestjo miruje za oziroma ob spodnjem delu oblačila, ki v tem položaju malenkostno presega kolena. Nogi sta sproščeni, ne pretesno skupaj. Premika zgolj svoji rdečkasti ustnici. Očesi sta okrogli in široko toda sproščeno odprti.

Aurora se pri borni namizni luči nasloni na svojo desno stisnjeno pest in milo zajoče. Ali si bila visoko na nebu svetlikajoča se zvezda? Sijajno nebeško telo, ki je privabljal vse tiste umazance, ki so se sprva zdeli kot neškodljiva, plašna čreda, ki potrebuje kraljico? Kaj se je potem zgodilo? Ali si postala umazana od vseh tistih spolzkih šap? Ali so tvoji do pasu segajoči lasje, taisti lasje zvezd, sonca, ki so trpeli tvojo dobrosrčnost, zahtevali, da jih prav sleherni dan namakaš v vedro hladne deževnice in solz? Ali si to res ti? No, njena krona je zdaj mnogo srečnejša. Njena krona, njen odkriti prijatelj ne potrebuje veliko skrbi potem,

ko je na zemljo narisala črto in za vekomaj ločila lepoto od grdavža.

55

Aurora: »Mar nisem bila jaz tista, ki te je nežno potegnila za vrat, ti kazala posledice tvoje zlosti? Ali nisem bila jaz tista, ki te je pobožala, objela, ko bi te drugi živega raztrgali, požrli? Mar te nisem s seboj v stolp vzela, ko je vroča solza po tebi polzela? Da, jaz sem bila tista, ki te je branila pred samoto, ko si sam sebi postajal nevaren. Ja, moji očesi sta tisti, ki sta znali prodreti skozi meglo in jo razpršiti, kakor sta za njo slutili sramežljivo lepoto.«

56

Aurora: »Namesto ponovnega plazenja: pretvori se v zver ... in uživaj v občutku, ki ga nisi še nikoli izkusil: postal si prost. Danes nisi otožnega pogleda iz daljave nakazal, da me želiš tako kot včeraj pogladiti po svileni obleki; v kako absurdno se je tvoja nova moč znenada preobrazila. Nikoli, resnično nikdar me takšne še nisi videl: moj obraz, moje besede so vpričo tvoje nove moči nad teboj izgubile vsakršen vpliv. Spregovori – končno, in gledam te, uho sem svoje zajela z dlanjo, moj obraz za trenutek uveni. Nenadoma se zavem svojega spodrsljaja, postane mi neznosno vroče, začnem teči ter se zaloputnem v najvišjo sobano svojega

stolpa; ledena roža mi boš pravil ti, in z višav bom nadte zvala vse, kar mi zvesto služi.«

57

Aurora: »Kakšna je vrednost tega sveta, ko je izropan dobrosrčnih ljudi in njihove medsebojne ljubezni? Raztreščen je okvir, ki je hranil, varoval in spajal njihova srca, ki se zdaj izgublajo v nepregledni zmešnjavi in otožna predajajo iskanje. Osamljena sanjajo nova kraljestva ... hrepené — drugo po drugem.«

58

Nasmehneš se, pokažeš zobé. Desno roko, z odprto, navidez nemočno dlanjo poneseš, privzdigneš do višine svojih priprtih očes in spregovoriš: »Dvignil si me do nebes s svojimi besedami. Jaz ne dovolim drugemu bedeti nad menoj v svojem resničnem svetu, v svetu, kamor se danes zgolj v mislih zatekam in čakam na jutri, da me črna zver ponese na meni ustrezni prestol.«

59

Aurora: »Zbudim se jaz, z rokama udarim ob trda tla. Zaplavala sem iz postelje. Izza svojih dolgih, prosto padajočih pramenov strmim predse: glas ... glas pravi: 'Kako dolgo si sposobna krojiti, rezati, gladiti robove sveta? Mar ne vidiš,

da si ostala zapuščena, odrezana na otočku? Da, celo tiste najredkejše redkosti, za dobre si jih oklicala, mirujejo v polepšanosti zgolj zastran tvoje slepe dobrote. Spoznala si gnilobo samega jedra, njegovo nujnost po bljuvanju ... vedno istega. Vedno bo vse gomazelo, vedno vse enako gomazelo.'«

Kdo lahko reče, da tvoji očesi z drugimi za seboj delita praznino? In kdo pravi, da boš z njimi združena v črnini?

Ali misliš, da ob vrvežavi poti rada gleda podobe, ki spominjajo na njeno telo? Vsi hodijo, vsi se bolj ali manj pokočno držé: njihova drža se razlikuje le po napetosti. Mar bi njihova votlost odgovarjala njihovim telesom: plaziti bi se morali, gomazeti med njenima nogama.

Samo slabotne in trpeče: drobna, žalostna, grozeče ranjena, ohromljena dekleta poleg strahotne, molčeče zveri zaslužijo nebeški objem. Svet otožnih ohromljenih mladih nepotrganih cvetlic in strahotnih zveri ... Ledena dlan vam, ohromljenkam in črnim zverem.

Rada objemaš ogromno temno zver in jo gladiš po debelih rokah. Dlani se vedno zadržita na širokih ramenih: leva tik

ob vratu, desna na ključnici. Preden se rahlo, neznatno druga od druge odmaknjeni ustnici začneta dotikati njenega desnega lica, očesi občudujeta odsev obličja v njenih zobeh. Čeprav se k njej priviješ vsak dopoldan, jo vedno s pogledom vprašaš, ali smeš nanjo položiti svoje zloščene mehke bele prste. Pet sekund jo gledaš v očesi, zamižiš, nakar se z glavo vrneš na njeno ramo, na ramo svojega poniževalca.

61

Vdrli so v njo, ji objokani nadeli lastno ime ter ji nagoto pokrili z dolgo, debelo haljo, ki jo zdaj besno previsoko dviguje, pred tem pa se ozira, če je njen stari siljevalec več ne nadzira.

62

Možinja si? Ako bi primerjali vsakdanjega moškega in žensko tega ali sosednjega kraja potem, ko bi obema porezali lase, jima prepovedali obrazno britje in času pustili odviti teden, bi videli, da medtem ko te pogled na moškega ne bi vznemirjal, bi se ženska pod lučjo takšne preizkušnje, razsvetljujoč njene redke tamkajšnje dlake, ki jim moški, kakor ne prenese misli, da ga privlači njegova nerazvita različica, sicer ne priznava obstoja, spremenila v nekakšno pošastnost in v tebi izzvala neprijeten občutek. Ker

moški zastopa docela razviti in zaradi tega lepši spol, se ti kljub pomanjkanju higiene ali lepotičenja ne bo zdel nemoški, ženska pa bo pod takšnimi pogoji postala studna oziroma nežensvena. Ženski torej ni dovoljeno biti tisto, kar je: v umskem in telesnem oziru nedorasla moška vrsta.

63

Mar je ženska polmoški, čigar moža dolžnost je ta, da z demonstracijo moči njeno možatost zavira in kroti, da bi v njej preko dosege krotkosti naglasil neko tujo, nemoško plat? Pogled na istospolni usmerjenki vznemirja: pred seboj imaš dva invalida, ki se za razliko od homoseksualcev zaman skušata penetrirati, zaradi česar sta nesrečnici nazadnje primorani uporabiti protezo, da ne bi njuno občevanje ostalo na stopnji predigre in da bi prejelo neki, sicer izkrivljeni, zaključek.

64

Ti si človek, ki iz spoštovanja do pravic, lastnine in dostojanstva svojega soplemenjaka zavrneš namige tuje žene, ki so ti izkazovane spričo nekih pritlehnih nagibov in ozračju pogostejše izpostavljenega hitrega jezika, kakor ljubiš samo smelost, skozi katero si je pridobil pridobljeno klanjanje in katere izražanja so sposobni izključno njemu podobni ljudje.

Pogledal si v nebo, okoli nog se ti zvijajoč
zadnje moledovanje ženskosti ali narave.
Zmečkal si jo. Zavrgl si to. Pogledal si v
Nebo.

*Projektorja sovražne, zgoščene, lepljive
črnine*

65

Somračni človek ali nekdo, ki najde in potrka na prava vrata, ki pa se mu ne odpró. Nekdo, ki skozi okno opazuje gostijo in posnema jedčeve manire in nekdo, ki navkljub svoji sposobnosti, da se zlahka zlije z množico, kakor je v njem vmešanega zadosti zemeljskega blata, razpozna in ceni tvoje duhovne dispozicije in ki zmore ostati nad gladino neobsijanega močvirja, vendar ki ga množica, kadar se znajde sam, ko jedčev vpliv izgine in ker ni kamniti otok, izdleti po svojem okusu.

66

Ni znano, zakaj bi človek soljudem odpri pogled na žar, ki ga ogreva, da bi ga mogli do umirajočih isker opljuvati in ukrasti, potem ko bi mu izmaknili stol in ga pokončali. V tvojih očeh ljudje postanejo zlobni, ko se morajo obračati med njimi, brez svojega svojega zatočišča, kamor bi se lahko pred njimi umaknila. Zasovraži jih. Motri jih s pristnim srdom. Kolikokrat si v svoji odmaknjenosti povzdigoval prostaka, le da si ob prvem koraku v dolino hrepenel po ponovnem umiku v samoto.

Izliv razumnikove sentimentalnosti na notno črtovje in oder: ljudje cenijo njegovo sposobnost hlinjenja čustev? Svetovno prizorišče: ljudje občudujejo sosedovo visoko zmožnost fingiranja občutij? Zahajanje v gledališče kot izraz ženstvene družbe, kajti ženstvene osebe, hiteče v gledališče ohranjat masko izkrivljene vzvišenosti, se ljubijo pretvarjati in si nadevati maske. Dovolj ti je evforičnih, izumetničenih pravičnikov, njihove maske, njihove svetlikajoče se gladke folije, v katero so oviti. S prahom zapolnjene ureznine na ponosno razgaljenem obličju, skrivajočem zlatno sredino, pa sam imaš.

O nespodobnosti glasbe. — Kadar se želi predati lepim, melanholičnim melodijam, naj se jim preda v samoti, saj je mimoidočim ali neprijetno opazovati vinjeno osebo ali pa jo zasmehujejo. Kadar človek napiše lepo in melanholično melodijo, naj jo zadrži zase, saj je ponujanje vina s strani opitega nelepo. Nelagodno je prisostvovati izlivu čustev, pa naj se precedijo skozi še tako fin filter.

Zakaj potrebujete njegov odgovor? Mar ne bi ličil na neolikanca, ki s svojimi

vulgarizmi obmeče opotekajočega se grobijana? Mar ne bi spominjal na vlačugo, ki svoje telo razdaja za piškav denar? Čemu bi ugodil vašim potrebam po odkritju duše druge osebe?

70

Kaj si ti? Mar nisi riba na suhem? Počasi trohneča, že davno izčrpana riba. Ta svet: delirij nekoga, ki umira ... in njegova bitka z mrhovinarji. Nista si podobna, večša. Drgni in drgni, razkrila boš strahotne temelje tisočerih obrazov, in ko bi se nekdo ohrabil, se odločil očistiti tvoje bistvo, bi te izdrnil.

71

Človek ne greši, ko se nameni osvoboditi od svojega v robotniški sloj ukleščenega telesa, zato se bo trpeči, ko bo presodil, da je grenkost okušanega trpljenja neznosna, v spremstvu grenkih misli od njega tudi poslovil. Manjka nam spomina, zato ne moremo vedeti ali smo pristali na zemeljsko življenje ali smo žrtve samovoljnosti, in kakor nam podpis ni razodet, tako nismo obvezani pristati na služenje. In ni nečastno obdelovati polja z lastnima rokama, vkolikor na njima ne pusti svojega pečata, in gnati živino z lastnoročno ustvarjenim bičem na svoji zemlji: nevredno je živeti, kot živi drobnica, deliti z njo isto streho, ji dajati

človeška imena in si uničevati nohte za istega gospodarja. Samomor človeka reši pred nepredstavljivim trpinčenjem, ki bi ga povzročile sline, cedeče se na njegovo lupino, ujeto v hlevu sredi bolščeče živine neprestano odprtih ust. In če pade na kolena, da bi pil iz napajalnika – izgubi človeškost in umre kot živina. Umre najraje kot človek.

72

Sekunda občutka vzvišenosti ti je vendarle vrednejša od stoletne dobe pohlevnega dela. V primeru, da si primoran živeti na način, ki ne samo, da te ni vreden, temveč te celo ponižuje, to je izsiljuje tvoje preoblikovanje po tujem okusu, ga uniči zato, da bi doživel če še tako kratek trenutek vzpona nad samo življenje.

73

Zavrzi torej ta telesni plašč, z njim pa vso sramoto, ki se nahaja v njegovih žepih in raztrganinah. Notranji očesi se upirata in zgražata nad telesom, ki ju s seboj vleče motrit nespodobna dejanja: zlo je namreč tisto, čemur morata biti priča proti svoji volji, kakor sta privezana k temu mesnatemu sramotilnemu stebru.

Pekel je zemlja, njemu pripadajoči ljudje demoni in vešče, in nebesa dražijo: »*Nisi doma.*« In zares, padci so neopisljivo boleči, takšni, da roko silijo v raztrganje telesa. Hočeš pobegniti skozi špranjo, zakaj sedaj veš: zemlja te ukrivlja. Nenadoma trčiš ob jez, ki deluje kakor spona, pri življenju ohranjajoča tvojo lupino, tvojo lastno celico v zaporu. In zbral boš moči, da ga napočiš, da skozi špranjo steče kri in z njo, kot na rešilnem splavu, tvoja zavest.

Odpravi se med ljudstvo, ozri se naokoli in ugledal boš v njegovih besedah, kretnjah, obrazih in očeh blato, valeče se, kot para dvigajoče se iz njegove stoletja stare, nespremenljive krvi. Vse bi storilo, vse, da bi jo v svojih telesih zadržalo: njegova oblačila in še tako temeljita izobrazba so zgolj površinskost: hiša iz kart, pa naj bo še tako zapletena – ob udarcu pesti se bo sesula. Glej zdaj, kako so njegovi elementi na ukaz padli na zgornji ekstremiteti, da bi v zameno za obdržanje svojega življenja storili neizrekljivo dejanje. S studom prežeta družba kot zapuščina robotniškega osvobajanja. Žlahtni nesrečnik bo gnanje na tlako odbil, preprečil, da bi se njegova oseba v mislih drugih izrisala poživinjena,

kajti storil bo samomor in s tem dokazal svojo človeškost. Vrne svojo sramoteno kri zemlji, o plemenitaš.

76

Postavi se sredi nekaj pripadnikov prostaškega sloja: ti bi začutili tvojo težnjo po ukrivljanju in prišlo bi do spremembe: bodisi do njihove ukrotitve, po kateri bi ti ovce, krave, osli začeli slediti in se odzivati na tvoje ukaze, bodi do tvojega smrtnega padca, ki bi ga vzrokovalo previsoko število pasjih elementov – kajti kako vulgaren, kako nizkoten in podel bi človek moral biti, da bi se vmesto pognanja lastnega telesa pozlu dal gnati kot živina? Vse ga je vredno, vse bi storil, samo da bi ga pri življenju obdržal, in ne samo to: pod takšnimi pogoji celo spravlja pod nebo nove rodove, da bi lahko tlačiteljem služili kot vir dela, toda ne da bi verjel v nujnost nekega tostranskega trpljenja za prejem posmrtna nagrade.

77

Svoje krvi še zdaleč niso pomislili razliti v zemljo, zakaj iz nje so bili od glave do pet. In ne gre jih spraševati o smislu porajanj novih nesrečnih zarodov, zakaj takšni morejo biti le v tvojih očeh.

V sobi. Le nadstropje nad peklom.

— ... Življenje je zaradi vročine neprijetno, vendar le-ta opominja, da bi lahko bilo še slabše. Pokukaj skozi špranjo. Ali vidiš norce? Velikan je med njimi. Pokoril je enega in postal eden izmed njih. Kleči. Sedaj prisluhni: ponavlja za njimi.

Tvoj nedostopni, nezlomljivi ponos se skriva v krogli neizmerno debelih zlatih sten, vendar pa tudi najmanjši trk izzove strašno donenje, ki te vsakokrat spravi v tihi bes.

Čeprav se tega ponavadi ne vidi, beseda zna hitro raniti najgloblje predele srca; kakor se hitro zameri, tako se hitro odpusti, vendar zlih besed srce nikoli ne iztrese. Res pa je, da veseli dogodek, ako prileti, prinese stanje burne blaženosti, kjer se s širokim nasmeškom odpusti tudi največjemu sovražniku, in, nasprotno, zel trenutek požene v brezdno, kjer se s parkljem in njegovimi pribočniki do hudodelca deli grozovito zamero. Hitro znate postati drobni in krhki v svoji samoti, toda ko vas prešine misel, da vas opazujejo ljudje, vas prevzame neznanska nezlomljiva volja do slepega kljubovanja temu svetu, njegovemu naraščaju,

njegovim tisočletja starim vodilom. Vi ste oni, ki človeku z iskrenim, iskrivim nasmeškom in širokima očesoma pomagate ostati na poti, prežemajoč ga z neomajno vero v njegov lastni prav in obče dobro. In večkrat dnevno se zadržite pri takšni ali drugačni duhovni sliki ter si s pomočjo ustrezne nesnovne melodije pred notranje oči pričarate vam pogodno prigodo.

81

Zares nenavaden je ta red, kakor si morate pristriči krila in se izmaličiti, da bi lahko zaživel med tistimi, ki so sklonjeni k prsti. Onim, ki se obvarujejo pred padcem, ne preostane drugega kot neki žalostni umik v puščino, kjer pa jim le trgoma uspe najti oazo odrešitve – samotno, nepopačeno mestece, ki jim dovoljuje, stalivši jim drobovne ledene kristale, da v samoti razprostrejo svoje ranjene, zmrznjene veje in jih prepustijo mehki svetlobi, da jih s svojim nežnim poljubljanjem ogreje in povrne v staro, pravo obliko.

82

Le sebi naj zver skuša zavladati. —
»Jaz sem pošast, ki si zasluži biti spravljena na tla, z orokavičeno roko zadavljena in odložena v gozdu, da bi se ob plesu tisoč tisočev malih nog na meni gostile ostale zveri.« – Nenadna jutranja

zdramitev v omotico ovite vesti. Čemu človeku jokati za zverjo? Naj bo njena smrt tako grozovita, kolikor je le mogoče.

83

O neprimernem prijateljstvu. — V nekem daljnem gozdu, skozi krošnje katerega žarki sonca redkoma obsijejo tla, je v majhnem grmu živel mlad stvor. Bal se je svoje osamljenosti, in kakor sta njegovo srce obdajala nezaupanje in prezir do sveta, tako sta mu trn in kopriva varovala pritlehno domovanje. — Gnezdenje nad zemljo sta bila lisičin in volkuljin dvor namreč prepovedala in smrtna kazen je doletela vsako krilato bitje, ki si je drznilo gnezditi nad glavami gospodaric. Nekega večera je tega stvora znova prevzel napad mučilne sramote. Sedel je in dal krili predse, da so se vroče solze ulile po obeh, in tako dejal svoji duši: »Ko se stara prijateljica, ki me vedno redkeje obiskuje, ob meni več ne prebudi in ko se kralj svetlobe umakne noči, pride nova prijateljica in me z nasprotne strani mize nepremično gleda v oči.« Črno obličje ga je razjedalo s kislimi solzami, vendar umirajočemu zlatnemu žaru za njegovimi očmi naposled uspe pregnati temno znanko. Nekega dne se poln zanosa odpravi v gozd, kjer sreča tri razposajene kožuharje. Ker ga ravno tedaj spremlja jasna prijateljica, se z njimi družijo in

zabava. Ko pa nagajivci opazijo njegovo posebnost, ga napadejo in mu odrežejo desno krilo. Nemočna pošast pobere krilo, z nežno otožnostjo za trenutek zavrne grozovitost, ki se ji je pripetila ter se začne umikati s prizorišča, ki ne bi smelo nikoli obstajati. Vse, kar je hudodelcem preostalo, je bila ustavitev srca še eni leteči svinji.

84

Oaza nenadkriljive drugosti, oaza nepremostljive podobnosti: iz obupa se na istem bregu v bližnji gozd kriči: »Ni mostu!« s prevarami samega sebe kažoč na nasprotnem. Ni mostu ... – Ne gre metati ljubih ti reči, o nesrečnež, umetnin ali česa drugega z visokega obzidja, kajti tujec še tako skrbno spuščenega po vsej gotovosti ne bo ujel. In četudi bi pristale v njegovih rokah ... – prizadela bi ga bolečina ulova.

85

Pričujoča knjižica – žepna, kakor je namenjena popotnikom, in na žalost izbljuvana v nekem zakotnem in otožnem jeziku: kot okolišna pozidava nerazgradljive, neuničljive, nepremične stavbe, katere pojavitev ali, bolje rečeno, obisk je opisan bolj spodaj. Videnje, ki je zlasti zastran odraščanja v domu, katerega stenam se je odrekalo kakršnokoli odbijanje religioznih besed in simbole, ostajalo v ozadju, dokler ni dolgčas s svojimi mučenji izsilil za spoznanje bolj poglobljeno iskanje očal, sposobnih izostriti podrobnosti odvijanja našega obstoja.

86

Wéydos (podoba), *weyd- (videti), vedeti (je videti); ugledanje form kot edina oblika razodetja. *Brezjazno uzrtje neke forme ali najvišja stopnja duhovnega gledanja.* — Zrli smo, ko smo, potrkavši na vrata smrti leta dva tisoč osmega, ne spominjajoč se zemeljskega življenja, za trenutek prestopili onstranski prag, iz rdečih plošč sestoječo zgradbo, iz katere je morda na zemljo padla noblesa. Plošče, izklesane v skladnih merah, sestavljajo s

črnine viseče osamljeno štiristolpno pravokotno obzidje. Bili smo ga zrl, toda ne skozi očesi človeka, v mislih izrisane reči do tega trenutka ne bivši drugega kot povezave med njegovimi raztresenimi sestavnimi elementi, ki jih ljudje ali posredniki med nesnovnim svetom in materijo v prvem prikličemo in ne vanj vtisnemo. Vstop v pekel: besnenje po ponovnem priklicu v življenje kot izraz ponižanja ali padca na zemeljska tla, nato zavedanje o izgubljenem in privajanje na kletko iz mesa in krvi – na trdo podlago, ki se jo mora zopet potipati. S posmrtnim nič, ki bi sicer moral biti nekaj neneizmuzljivega, kakor ne bi bil ne tisto, ne ono, ne to, ne tale, se naj razume zgoraj opisano stanje, stanje, ko smo se otresli mesnatega filtra: brezčutno motrenje nerazgradljivega, večnega in nepremičnega, opazovanje brez kakršnegakoli doživljanja čustev, ki se prevajajo po telesu in kakršna so znana na zemlji.

87

V onstranstvu miruje zgoraj opisana zgradba, h kateri stremlje sleherni zavest. Življenje, težeče k temu, da se razvije do Tkalčeve oblike, napravivši pot od črva do človeške lupine, katere ustroj dovoljuje goščenje zavesti, teženj in pogledov, potrebnim onim, da bi jo

materializirali, je doseglo točko, preko katere nikoli ne zaide; božje okončine kot osamljeni trn begajo naravo. Preko človeških rok se prevaja zavest, da v materijo vtisne nespremenljivo in neskončno, iz onstranstva izhajajočo neustvarjeno formo.

88

Onstran našega prostora smo bili priča *rdeči zgradbi*, in mar ne bi moral skozi eno od njenih oken s široko odprtima nepremičnima očesoma v vodoravno daljavo gledati Tkalec? In ker bi bil deležen spokojnega, trdnega zadovoljstva, kakor bi si sam sebi bil v takšno nezlomljivo zadoščenje, bi si ustvaril zrcalo, neko vsemirje, da bi se lahko v njem občudoval. Dal bi torej materiji izgnesti svoj motni odsev, življenje bi preževal z zavestjo, da bi mu izgradilo zemeljsko stavbo. Spreminjala bi se zdaj tadvá nazaj v brezoblično kepasto glino, da bi za poslednjim zasanjano stvaril še en niz brezštetih ogledal.

89

K bolj zgoraj zapisanemu pa je treba žalostno pripomniti, da ker gre za neko osebno razodetje, se ga mora potisniti ob stran, in ne sme se ga vzeti za neko stvarno ploščad, ki bi sicer, viseč na nebesju, name storivši tako močan vtis,

morala služiti za gradnjo k njej vijočih se
stopnic.

Zaključek

90

Vzpostavi naj se tiho, hladno sožitje, sožitje zadržanih oči in očes, in tako ognju sovražnosti ne dati plapolati. Resnično, kadar je človek prisiljen trpeti neznosni vonj, ki ga oddajajo obdajajoči, svojemu obupanemu srcu, prežetemu z bridko grenčino, kdajpakdaj in po pravici dovoli tarnati in objokavati svojo usodo. Kadar blago srce zla sreča pahne v čeber prostaštva, mu grenka skustva, izvirajoča iz nedolžnega razdajanja njegove dobrote, stkejo bodikav ščit. Nisi pošast. Zlo s teboj ni zraščeno. Ljudem si namenil neizogibljive udarce le takrat, ko si se skozi nepregledno množico v svojem velikem mehurčku odločil prebiti na varno, opazujoč, kakor da se je bil upočasn timer, reko ljudi. To so s strani tvoje osebe izrečene neprimerne žal besede, ki se jih ne bi smelo slišati.

91

Stati ob gozdnem potoku, odsevajočem mesečno svetlobo, in zastran lepote, kot v času zledenele, se za trenutek pozabi, da se jo še vedno motri izza očes lupine, ob katere nogah neslišno mrgoli soroden ji stud.

KONEC

Bartolomej Maussar